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TIRZA BRÜGGEMANN

ANYMALS, POEMS, EMPATHY

A Zoopoetical Study

Anymals, Poems, Empathy

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ANYMALS, POEMS, EMPATHY

A Zoopoetical Study

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Aan mijn moeder en mijn vader

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Note to the Reader

The word "anymal" in the title of this study is no misprint. While writing about anymals figuring in poems, I grew more and more uneasy with the term "animal poetry". True, this more recognisable rubric probably brings to mind precisely the poems that are discussed in this study: poems about cats, dogs, horses, and maybe even less cuddly or eye-catching animals, such as insects. When not considered in much depth, the term "animal poetry" is awkward only because it refers to "animals", which, despite the classification being so familiar to us, do not exist. Given that humans are animals, one might expect that, in writing about nonhuman animals in poetry, I would refer to my corpus as "nonhuman animal poetry" or "other animal poetry". Although these labels capture perfectly well who I am writing about, namely a group of creatures that are not humans, there are disadvantages to these designations as well. Firstly, they still set humans apart from other animals, even though some nonhuman animals are much closer to humans than to any other animal species. Secondly, "nonhuman animals" are so diverse as a group that this "one-label-fits-all" approach becomes gradually more uncomfortable when reading about a specific group or individual.

Seeing others beyond oneself as a homogenous group is not morally neutral. In this respect, the activist and philosopher Lisa Kemmerer alludes to the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein in writing that "language holds a moral element and is created and recreated" (10). She proposes a new word, "anymal", intended to mean "any animal who does not happen to be the species that I am" (10). Although this term still draws a dividing line between nonhuman animals and humans, she notes as two advantages that, firstly, "othering" prefixes like 'non' and 'other' are absent and, secondly, the word is short and therefore easy to use and to remember. Moreover, "anymal" does not only nullify the disadvantages of "othering"terms. As Kemmerer points out, the word is also a form

of verbal activism in that it acknowledges the linguistic need for a word to refer to a – giant – group that is not the same species as oneself, but at the same time swiftly draws attention to how we use such a word. At some moments, when I need to refer to an assumed human-animal binary, or when I use a fixed expression like "animal studies" I write the word with an 'i'. In all other instances, when the common usage prescribes "animal", I use "anymal" instead. I see the 'any' in "anymal" as an incentive to think about the manifold groups it refers to. The term "anymal" draws attention not only to the word itself, but also to reality and to our conception of reality, which is similar to the "stop-and-think" ability of poetry. Using the term "anymal" as a form of verbal activism is consistent with my view on the nature of poetry as an engagement with the world. For these reasons, I adopt the term "anymal" in this study.

Introduction

Can we know what it is like to be a bat, cow, or bee? And if we were to answer the question negatively, what would our answer be based upon? Differences in bodily makeup, the fact that we do not speak the same language, or other reasons? If we were to approach this issue sceptically, we would cast doubt on the possibility of knowing anymal minds, thinking that it would be better to err on the side of caution. The philosophical exercise of being sceptical about the existence and knowability of other minds seems to gain in plausibility when the other minds in question are anymal minds. *Scepsis* would end in not having to allow for the possibility of anymals having experiential lives. However, the sceptic has to account for instances of anymals and human animals living closely together, communicating effectively, and taking care of each other. A cat who learns that meowing is the way to attract his fellow human's attention or a dog who senses that her companion needs comfort are examples of co-creative learning. It is in these instances that the sceptic's ideas about the incommensurability between species' minds appear to be especially problematic.

In animal studies, the sceptical stance toward anymal minds has been abandoned (Andrews, *Animal Mind*; E. Meijer; Wynne and Udell; Andrews and Beck; Zapf). In their various disciplinary modes, ethologists, biosemioticians, legal scholars, philosophers, and artists endeavour to come closer to understanding anymals – and, as a by-product, learn to see the value of other disciplines' approaches. Many supposed truths about anymals have been countered in animal studies. Scholars have dispelled the idea that culture can only be found in human animals (Rocheleau and Nirmal, 51-52), that anymals cannot learn prototypes (Wynne and Udell, 47), and that human animals live a life that is closed off from their ecological surroundings (Morton; Gruen), to name just three. Conceptual criticism and the analysis of empirical data has given rise to

a new paradigm for thinking about anymal minds, which is centred on the idea that anymals are agents rather than mindless machines (Moe 9).

In this non-sceptical consideration of anymals, the first supposed truth to be discarded is the Cartesian dualism between body and mind.[1] After all, if we distinguish body from mind, behaviour from experience, and expressions from feelings, then we can only assume that anymals are philosophical zombies – bodies acting as if they have experiential life, but in fact without phenomenal consciousness. Even though the notion of the inseparability of body and mind is commonly accepted in psychology, philosophy, and the practice of medicine, a kind of dualism still prevails with regard to the minds of anymals. Moreover, mid-twentieth-century behaviourism also contributed to the idea that anthropomorphising anymals was a sign of an unscientific approach.[2] For a long time, the possibility of shifting perspectives – let alone empathising with anymals – was not taken seriously (De Waal; Goodall). Leaving behind the sceptical approach to anymal opens up a broad field of possibilities and questions. Above all, it allows to search for new terminology that befits anymals as psychophysical wholes. Equally, considering anymals as agents leads to new findings that affect long-standing definitions of concepts such as intentionality, meaning, communication, and empathy (the focus of this study). The interpretation of all of these concepts is again open to debate.

An exploration of the role of zoopoetry in challenging Cartesian dualism and searching for a new terminology is central to this wider revisionist project. The definition of zoopoetry and zoopoetics is not clear cut, but in any case, the genre involves recognising the alterity of anymals by listening "otherwise" (Driscoll "Unheard" 8) and "an attentiveness to another species' bodily *poiesis*" (Moe 10). Furthermore, zoopoetry relates to anymals residing in poetry and considers the ways in which the anymals themselves shape the poem. When readers and poets share in attentive listening, presentations of anymals in zoopoetry can take the form of an engagement with an anymal – an approach deeply lacking in scientific accounts (Andrews *How* 9). On a more cautious note, poetic accounts of engagements with anymals run the risk of anthropocentrism. Finding a way to empathetically engage with anymals whilst refraining from understanding them on one's own terms is, I think, the challenge that the poets I discuss set for themselves.

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1 See Andrews (*Animal Mind*) for a critical evaluation of Descartes' influence on the philosophy of anymal minds (7-8) and Riskin (2016) for a discussion of the paradigm shift from a mechanistic view of nature to a conception of nature as having agency.

2 For an overview of the effect of Cartesian dualism on the study of anymal minds, see Panksepp.

Zoopoetics has found its way into discussions in animal studies thanks to literary scholars who query anthropocentrism and engage with poetic anymals as a central part of their work. They include Aaron Moe, Louise Westling (*Logos*), Onno Oerlemans, Michael Malay, and Kári Driscoll and Eva Hoffmann. In this body of work all researchers, to a lesser or greater extent, draw attention to the question of anymals outside of a text versus anymals inside of a text. In providing three illustrations of the back and forth between text and world, I want to show what has triggered my interest in the main questions that run through this project.

The first example is from Oerlemans' monograph *Poetry and Animals: Blurring the Boundaries with the Human*, in which he writes that "poetry has the potential of engaging the physical being, the individual creature. It can originate in direct experience and emotion, retain mystery and blur boundaries" (8). Some pages later, however, he writes of "a poem that somehow registers the reality of the individual animal in and of itself, that allows the animal to signify itself or bridges a gap between observer and animal … some poems express the desire to reach this *impossible ideal*, while others clearly do not" (21-22; my emphasis). Whereas in the first quotation Oerlemans does not explicitly sever text from world, in the second he suddenly suggests the existence of a gap impossible to bridge. A second example is offered by Driscoll when he refers to the philosopher George Bataille who probes the potential of engaging with anymals through art and poetry. He sees the intimate link between art and anymals:

> [t]he animal opens before me a depth that attracts me and is familiar to me. In a sense, I know this depth: it is my own. It is also that which is farthest removed from me, that which deserves the name depth, which means precisely that which is unfathomable to me [ce qui m'échappe]. But this too is poetry [or: it is also poetry; mais c'est aussi la poésie]. (qtd. in "Sticky Temptation" 215, alternative translation: Driscoll)

The depth Bataille experiences results in a "doomed-to-fail leap", which Driscoll describes as follows: "Animality is that which eternally eludes our attempts to capture it in language. In absolute terms, this poetic leap is doomed to fail – we will never reach the other side – but this is precisely what constitutes its value" ("Sticky Temptation" 216). Reaching the other side of an assumed gap is a theme that already appeared in Oerlemans' paragraph and we will come across many times. Finally, Malay considers the exercise of hearing a poetic squirrel. The purpose of this exercise, he suggests, is not to physically succeed in hearing a squirrel; this is rather a matter of sensibility, through which one can imagine 'what it is like' (2). Further into the text, however, it becomes clear

that Malay is not only doubtful about the desirability of identification with anymals, but rejects the manoeuvre in view of the danger of "projective or incorporative identification":

> The idea of sympathy … may end up eliding distinctions between humans and the nonhuman in such a way that we come to identify as the subject of our sympathy – as in, for example, a jaguar muttering 'some drum-song of murder'. In certain cases, identification can be a very dubious aim. (21)[3]

It seems that in all positions identifying with anymals is seen as an impossible ideal; between humans and anymals exists a gap that we cannot cross. This is partly because we cannot come to know anymals in ways we come to know humans, which implies that identification will inevitably lead to dubious anthropomorphic appropriation of the anymal.

These three passages from Oerlemans, Driscoll, and Malay indicate a hesitancy towards exploring the possibility of identifying with anymals through poetry. These hesitancies differ dramatically from Martha Nussbaum's confident commentary on fictional narratives figuring human animal protagonists: "Narrative art has the power to make us see the lives of the different with more than a casual tourist's interest – with involvement and sympathetic understanding" (*Cultivating Humanity* 88).[4] Contrary to the three examples given in the former paragraph, Nussbaum does not draw a line between the narrative and the real world. In fact, in real life tourists are often thought to have a reduced and filtered vision of reality, whereas the reader of novels enjoys a deep, layered view.

The cautiousness of Oerlemans, Bataille, and Malay raises some questions. Why do readers of zoopoetry fear eliding the distinctions between anymals and human animals, despite the fact that we experience identification, as Malay suggests? Would this fear be diminished in cases in which reader and protagonist are of the same species? Or is it a matter of genre: would narrative fiction figuring anymals lead to different positions on the line between real and imagined life? Why should it be impossible to identify without projecting oneself onto the anymal; is this a specific danger *because* the other is an anymal? And why would anthropomorphism be inevitable, as Malay implies? Does this

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3 The line "some drum-song of murder" is taken from Ted Hughes' "Second Glance at A Jaguar".

4 Suzanne Keen critically discusses Nussbaum's "empathy-altruism" assumption, which entails that we "become… better world citizen[s] through reading canonical novels" (*Empathy Novel* vii). In her study, Keen formulates her criticism succinctly: "I find the case for altruism stemming from novel reading inconclusive at best and nearly always exaggerated in favor of beneficial effects of novel reading" (*Empathy Novel* vii).

apply to any human character in a novel as well; are they in fact the author in disguise?

These questions emerge from an area of tension that is created by the following series of oppositions:

1. Anthropocentrism versus anymals in themselves;
2. Projectivism versus empathy or sympathetic identification; and
3. Anymals inside of a text versus anymals outside of a text.

The tensions conjured by these binaries are at the heart of my dissertation. Remarkably, the terminology used in debates concerning the zoopoetical is very similar to that used in the philosophical discussion of anymal minds. The idea of reaching for an 'impossible ideal', along with the image of the doomed-to-fail leap, resembles the sceptical stance regarding anymal minds. In the philosophical discourse around anymal minds, however, the sceptical stance has lost its significance, partly as a result of empirical research. One might counter my analogy between the two fields by saying that poetry and philosophy are different areas of practice and that empirical data does not alter the fact that there is a gap between anymals within and without a text. No one will deny that poems are textual events, but then why is it that we do not hesitate to say that novels depicting human-animal lives instigate an empathetic attitude in the reader in real life (Djikic et al.)? What is more, high school students are encouraged to read novels largely because literature is thought to enlarge their empathic circle (Nussbaum *Cultivating* 88-89). Is it solely an assumed species gap that keeps the sceptical stance valid when reading and evaluating zoopoetry?

In this project, I have approached poems as explorations "towards the possible" as Judith Beveridge puts it (333). In this sense, the probing powers of poems can be read as a way of critiquing existing paradigms. Hence, I do not take philosophy and poetry to be separate areas of reflection. For the purposes of this project, poetry, in my view, is best evaluated through a phenomenological lens, which allows one to stay close to one's senses and primordial way of thinking. My two leading questions in this project are connected with the idea of zoopoets being conceptual deconstructivists, in that they question, unsettle, and reshape concepts:

1. In what ways does zoopoetry confront and unsettle Cartesian dualism and the above-mentioned oppositions?
2. How do instances of perspective shift and empathy evoked through zoopoetry contribute to the empathy debate?

The merit of zoopoetry has not yet been fully explored in empathy studies. Still, as a fringe area of reflection it has the potential to reveal assumptions at work in the empathy debate and occasion a more inclusive definition of empathy. The default understanding of the term assumes that empathy is only possible between separate selves whose emotions match up as a result of similarities in their bodily makeup (Coplan and Goldie; Maibom *Empathy*). Furthermore, Cartesian dualism is sometimes still evident in reflections on empathy. Although more attention is given to phenomenological approaches towards empathy, divisions between cognitive and affective forms of empathy are largely anthropocentric and rest on a definition of human animals that divides mind from body. Poems that give anymals a voice or focalise their perspective, by contrast, integrate body and mind in a way that links up with current views on the embodiedness of knowledge and phenomenological accounts of the lived body.

To imagine an anymal as a whole, poets use techniques that I have labelled 'zoopoetical tools'. A number of these techniques – such as rhythm, metaphor, simile, and neologism – are common and appear in poetry at large. It is in zoopoems, however, that these tools are put to the specific purpose of bridging the assumed gap between anymals and human animals and thus connecting with anymal energies. In addition to these familiar tools, I discern a series of other techniques: descriptions *ex negative*, pronoun drop, commingling words, questions and hesitations, and zoopoetical chiaroscuro: the poetic equivalent of the chiaroscuro effect in painting and photography, whereby something is starkly illuminated whilst other elements fade into the background. These tools are all aimed at foregrounding the anymal and diminishing the presence of human subjectivity.

Not all zoopoetry proved to be suited for this project, as I discovered when compiling my corpus. My choice of poetry has been influenced by the literary scholar Elizabeth Atkins' observation that in post-First World War America the depiction of anymals in poetry shifted from the allegorical to "carefully literal" (263). This shift in the arts is also recognised by Kári Driscoll, who characterises it as artists' "fervent search for a nonhuman perspective on the world". Furthermore, he sees it as the task of literary theory and criticism to "allow animals to be themselves". This is an uncommon perspective, for anymals are often regarded as metaphors ("Sticky Temptation" 213, 214). Together with Atkins' observation, Driscoll's characterisation has influenced my choice of poetry. However, how anymals in poetry can be themselves is something that remains to be decided. When considering poetry in which anymals are used as stand-ins for humans or symbolise human virtues, we might say that it performs a kind

of negative zoology in that anymals are not presented as themselves.[5] In empathising with these anymals, with whom are we empathising?

Conversely, the idea that certain poetic anymals 'are themselves' requires analysis, which I conduct partly by grouping the zoopoems examined in this dissertation. To bring different engagements with anymals in poetry into focus, I distinguish between four groups of poetic anymals. In three of these groups anymals are partially or wholly in service of humans; in the last they are presented in their alterity. By grouping the poems, I do not want to suggest that their characteristics never overlap or that there are no other ways of organising and approaching zoopoetry. Still, these groupings play a guiding role throughout this project, albeit in the background, in that they bring us to a clearer understanding of what the phrase anymals "as themselves" might mean.

The first group consists of allegorical poems in which anymals are used as stand-ins for humans or human virtues. In these poems, the courageous lion and cunning fox have full-blown conversations about human problems. In the second group, anymals are recognisable as anymals because they perform species-specific behaviour. In the poem as a whole, however, they symbolise something that the speaker has lost: paradise, youth, or innocence and purity. Anymals in this group are often mystified, frequently through zoopoetical chiaroscuro. Although mystified anymals no longer speak of human values and affairs, this is mainly because they no longer speak at all. The common denominator in this group is that anymals often function as symbols of loss. In the third and penultimate group, anymals again are recognisable as a specific anymal but are primarily used to present the human reader with a moral challenge. Simply by being there, they epitomise the decline of species and their habitats, to give just one example, or how they, unlike human animals, live in harmony with their ecological surroundings, to give another. 'Anymals as moral appeal' would be an apt description of the anymals in this group.

In these three groups we read about anymals, but always in relation to human animals; they are substitutes for either humans as a whole (group 1), the things that humans long for (group 2), or the things that humans need to learn (group 3). In contrast, the final group presents anymals not in service of human beings, but in their alterity. For the purpose of this project, this last group of zoopoetry is the most instructive. If we want to explore how zoopoetry can evoke empathy with poetic anymals then poems that provide a space for their

5 Onno Oerlemans discusses the difficulty of grouping zoopoetry (21-23). He argues that even the seemingly obvious category of anymals in fables and allegories is not that evident at all, because allegorical anymals still reflect "something of the actual animal" (24). For the purpose of this project, however, there seems to be too little 'actual animal' in this group to start thinking about empathy and a shift in perspectives.

alterity are to be the final group. 'Anymals as alterior beings', then, is a suitable header for this group of poems, in which the aforementioned zoopoetical tools abound. Together, these techniques serve to background the voice of the poet and foreground the anymal. It is as if poets push language to its limits to both capture and set free the anymals they write about.

The two leading questions that I cited earlier on – one having to do with overcoming Cartesian dualism, the other with zoopoetical empathy – provide the structure for this project. My endeavour of formulating a zoopoetical definition of empathy starts in chapters 1 and 2, "Philosophical and Literary Perspectives on the Problem of Anymal Minds" and "Giving Anymals a Voice". In these chapters I explain how the problem of anymal minds is driven by Cartesian dualism and examine the extent to which this affects the anymals voiced in poetry.

Then, in chapter 3, "Openness, Wholeness, and Growth: Exploring Additional Zoopoetical Tools", I explore the ways in which zoopoetry confronts Cartesian dualism. In so doing, I offer a new interpretation of empathy and delineate a shift in perspectives precipitated by zoopoetical tools. In interpreting zoopoems, I show that grasping the phenomenality of instances of what I call 'feeling with' evoked by zoopoetry requires a different approach to defining empathy to that which currently prevails.

In chapter 4, "Anymals Moving Through Text and World", I take a step back to address the intricate relation between text and world, and explore what it means to engage with an anymal through a poetic text. In chapter 5, "Towards an Understanding of Zoopoetical Empathy", I turn to the philosophies of Simone Weil and of Iris Murdoch for the workable concepts with which to undertake a phenomenology of zoopoetry. Weil's account of intersubjective encounter does not focus on the need for our feelings or perspectives to match up with those of the other. Instead, she proclaims that for a truthful perception of the other, we have to be "penetrated by the object", which is only possible when our selves or egos dissolve (*Waiting* 111). According to Murdoch, the artist's task is that of presenting others in their otherness through a process of unselfing, whilst instigating that same process in spectators of their art in turn ("Sovereignty of Good" 353). I show that this process of unselfing is visible in zoopoetry. This argument continues in chapter 6, "Four Poetic Case Studies", in which I will show how the aforementioned zoopoetical techniques are all aimed at lessening the presence of the human voice. As such, they amount to a form of poetical unselfing, able to create less anthropomorphised presentations of anymals and reach for a presentation of anymals "as themselves". Consequently, the practice of 'feeling with' evoked through zoopoetry appears to be far more a matter of unselfing than of matching human and anymal feelings.

The majority of zoopoetical studies attend to poetry written in English and are produced by Anglophone poets or researchers. In line with this trend, this project's structure and related questions have been directed by the work and evaluation of the work of Ted Hughes, Les Murray, Elizabeth Bishop, D.H. Lawrence, Meghan O'Rourke, Judith Beveridge, and Mary Oliver. However, I also decided to include Dutch poetry as it has yet to be evaluated through the frame of zoopoetics, even though there are excellent examples of Dutch zoopoems such as those written by Judith Herzberg, Joke van Leeuwen, and Frederike Harmsen van Beek (which appear in group 4) as well as by Vasalis and Ida Gerhardt (which appear in group 2). Their work may open up new material and topics different from Anglophone poetry in certain ways. The zoopoetical work of Judith Herzberg, for instance, embodies the technique of questioning and hesitating, and Harmsen van Beek's fragmented phrases inhibit an anthropomorphist view of the anymals she presents. Setting out on this evaluation of poetry, however, felt like entering hazardous territory. On this trek, the fact that I share a linguistic history and landscape with the poets has proven advantageous, allowing me to honour their specific grammar and choice of words. Unless otherwise indicated, the translations of the Dutch poems are my own. I hope that the translations make these poems accessible to a wider audience.

Methodologically speaking, the chapters exhibit a hermeneutical movement. The chapters in which anymals and poetry are theorised (especially chapter 1) alternate with more interpretative chapters, which revolve more closely around the poetry (especially chapter 3). This circular motion is not only evident in the chapters; the endeavour to redefine zoopoetical empathy also has a hermeneutical character. It is through the poems that I distinguish the zoopoetical tools and, in turn, these tools shape my definition of zoopoetical empathy. In the concluding chapter, I argue for a definition of zoopoetical empathy which, quite unlike the default definition of empathy, is premised on selflessness. It is important to note, though, that it is only through the poems that the elements of this definition are substantiated.

As I have mentioned above, the field of animal studies is wide and offers various views and methods for research into anymal lives. It is not possible to address all of these approaches in a demarcated project like this. That being said, it might strike readers as odd that I do not engage in discussions concerning animal ethics, especially since time is against us all, species are dying out, and systemic cruelty against anymals is far from being a thing of the past. I hope, however, that the zoopoems, as well as my interpretations and reflections on zoopoetical empathy, convey an appeal to honour and feel with individual lives of any kind.

1

PHILOSOPHICAL AND LITERARY PERSPECTIVES ON THE PROBLEM OF ANYMAL MINDS

1.1 Wittgenstein's lion and Nagel's bat

The problem of other minds is a topic in philosophy that concerns the existence, knowability, and communicability of minds other than one's own. It is closely connected to scepticism, for it calls into question our basic intuitions in dealing with other minds on a daily basis. Scepticism with regards to other minds is known for shaking the fundaments of our knowledge, in that it ultimately considers the possibility of humans being philosophical zombies. Even though this possibility seems far-fetched, the sceptical stance is hard to counter. On what grounds can I draw similarities between my own experiential life and that of another person? The arguments for doing so (similarities in behaviour or giving the same names to feelings) all lack the common ground of a shared experiential life. So, some philosophers opt for a way out of scepticism by taking the route of common sense and only start doubting when there is reason for doubt.[6]

When the other minds in question are anymal minds, there always seem to be more than one reason for doubting their experiential life, which makes the sceptical stance even more difficult to refute. Countering the sceptic by pointing to similarities in behaviour between humans and anymals (and therefore perhaps similarities in our experiential lives) feels inappropriate: I (human animal) might be anthropomorphising anymals by ascribing certain mental states to them. And even if anymals are communicating with us, how can I ever say: "I know what they are feeling or experiencing", or even "I know what it is like to be them"?

We can refer to this problem in several ways. We can, for instance, use the phrase "the problem of animal minds" (James 33), which is short and straight-

6 For an extensive evaluation of scepticism and possible counterarguments, see De Mey.

forward but implicitly draws a line between humans and other anymals. For this reason, the philosopher Kristin Andrews writes about "the problem of other animal minds" (*Animal Mind*). However, this suggests that humans are the standard against which anymals are seen as other. We might then refer to "the other species of mind problem" (Allen and Bekoff), which leaves the possibility open that non-anymal species, such as trees or plants, have minds too. For this study, this latter phrase is not sufficiently specific. To avoid all of the hitches mentioned above, I prefer "the problem of anymal minds" using the word 'anymal' as explained in the "Note to the Reader".

Two classic (and perhaps even overused) illustrations of the problem of anymal minds are offered by Ludwig Wittgenstein and Thomas Nagel. Wittgenstein suggests that the experiential world of a lion is fundamentally ineffable: "If a lion could talk," he writes, "we could (*könnten*) not understand him" (223). According to Wittgenstein, the world of a lion cannot be compared to our world and since the boundaries of our language form the boundaries of our world we cannot enter a lion's world. The "*könnten*" in the original German leaves more room for doubt than "could", in that "*könnten*" could also mean 'might'.[7] Even if that statement is perhaps not as definite as it sounds in English, Wittgenstein puts into words an issue concerning anymal minds in sceptical philosophy: that the incommensurability of our separate worlds inhibits our expression of them.

The other famous illustration is given by Thomas Nagel in his article "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" (1974), which is central to the next section of this chapter. Its influence cannot be underestimated: so much is indicated by the fact that philosophers, biologists, and anyone else reacting to the problem of anymal minds still have the need to agree to or challenge its conclusions. Researchers see it as a pivotal text, for it captures the problem of anymal minds at the intersection of animal studies and theories of consciousness. The article's main question is whether subjective experience is ultimately ineffable, especially when others have a different bodily makeup. This query is often answered sceptically. The writer Jenny Diski, for instance, takes the position of the sceptic by referring to Nagel:

> When Thomas Nagel sets out to show that we can't possibly know what it is to be a bat, he isn't making any claim about what bats are, or what we are. Only what we aren't and therefore can't know. We don't do sonar. How can we imagine being a creature whose being in the world is based on pos-

7 For a discussion of this sentence, see Anscombe's translation of it and Churchill on its place in Wittgenstein's philosophy.

> sessing such an unfamiliar mechanism to apprehend their environment? We can analogise about the sonar we use for finding what we can't see, but those are machines that compensate for the senses we rely on. The world of the bat is not our world, not even accessible to our imagination, nor even our language. We can, he says, only imagine what it would be like for me to be you, not for you to be you. This isn't an ethical distinction between bats and me, or you and me, but an abyss of knowledge that we simply can't cross. (73)

The unbridgeable 'abyss of knowledge' – an image that we came across already in the Introduction and will come across in the following chapters – chimes with the wonder we feel when we look at our dog or cat: "What do I know about their mind? What is the shape of their thoughts?" Faced with minds so ostensibly different from one's own, even when it comes to one's companion anymal, it would seem that the only apt answer to these questions is given in the sceptical stance, which refrains from making knowledge statements about anymal minds.

It is possible, however, to have a different take on the problem of anymal minds, which begins by focusing on our similarities rather than our differences. That said, choosing to think along this trail is more daunting because it does not relate to the abyss intuitively sensed when encountering anymal minds. The philosopher Bernard Rollin's reaction to Wittgenstein's lion serves as a starting point for exploring this alternative path. For Rollin, the claim that

> we could not understand a lion if it spoke ... [is] implausible. I venture to suggest that our forms of life are not all that dissimilar: both the lion and I have interests in eating, sleeping, sex, avoiding encroachments on our environments, and so forth about which we could doubtless make small talk. (142)

Surprisingly, it might be possible to agree with both Diski and Rollin at the same time. We understand what Diski is saying in that there appears to be an otherness in anymals that we simply cannot re-enact or approximate, but simultaneously, we might agree with Rollin because we can see the similarities between lions and humans as well. It seems that we can move back and forth between the sceptical and interpretive stance regarding anymal minds. This back and forth reflects our wonder at seeing a mind that we can view as both alike and different from our own. Some of our conclusions regarding the knowability of anymals minds, it follows, rest upon our own attitude.

The fact that much depends on our disposition can also be learned through Rollin's remark; the unbridgeable abyss assumed by Diski depends, at least partly, on our presuppositions. For instance, Diski claims that we do not do sonar and can therefore never know what it is like to employ such an 'unfamiliar mechanism'. Although we do not have a bat's sonar equipment, it is possible to in fact use a kind of sonar in daily life. I shall give an example of this here. Whether one views it as a fully fledged instance of echolocation is a matter of zeroing in on similarities or enlarging differences. When we find our way in a room in the dark, we move cautiously. It is by making sounds and concentrating on how they resonate that we come to know that a wall is near or far. Why would we not accept this as an instance of echolocation?[8] Furthermore, however commonsensical the notion of an "unbridgeable abyss" may sound, we do seem to cross it on a daily basis in our interactions with anymals. When a cat turns her ears backwards and enlarges her eyes, for instance, an experienced cat owner will know for certain that the cat is something like 'annoyed' or 'angry' and understands immediately that the appropriate response to this behaviour is to back off. Is it not possible that in such moments we know partly what it is like to be a cat?

The question of whether concrete interactions with anymals or folk psychology concerning anymal minds should be taken seriously and deserves a place in scholarship is still debated.[9] Pending the outcome of this debate, it is in any case safe to respond to Diski that even if a cat's world differs from my own, this does not mean that we do not also share and co-create a world. Although it is possible to remain sceptical about the knowability of what it is like to be a cat for a cat, to suggest that there is an unbridgeable abyss instead of an in-principle accessible world is to make an assumption, not state a fact. Anymals and human animals respond to each other successfully in apt ways; rather than starting by emphasising our differences, there is nothing at all unscientific about studying our similarities (Andrews, *How*). Or, even more crucially, we might question whether our dissimilarities create an abyss or even wonder whether similarities are not in the least required to attune our behaviour to each other (on a more fundamental level still, we might ask whether attuned

8 Diski's statement goes beyond the scope of Nagel's argument. Nagel is not concerned with the epistemological problem of *knowing* what it is like to be a bat. Rather, he concentrates on the difficulty of forming a *concept* of what it is like to be a bat. Diski only refers to the epistemological problem, thereby stretching Nagel's argument. In fact, Nagel refers to people using echolocation in daily life. In Nagel's line of thought, however, in forming a concept of the subjective experience of someone else, it does not suffice to echolocate yourself through a dark room. This does not give you the subjective experience of bats echolocating their way through the air.

9 For a discussion of the use of folk psychology for interpreting anymal behaviour, see, for instance, Andrews *Animal Mind* and "Folk Psychological Spiral".

behaviour is the same as successful communication). A lion's world and a bat's world may only be inaccessible when leaning back in epistemological scepticism. When we deviate from this line of thought, though, we understand that the possibility of engaging with their worlds depends on our willingness to scrutinise the assumptions that make incommensurability so attractive. At that turning, our eagerness to come to know them outshines scepticism.

1.2 "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?"

As I have said, most theorists of anymal minds – be they biologists, philosophers or literary critics – begin their writings with a reference to Thomas Nagel's famous article "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?", as have I. The article expresses succinctly the great difficulty we face in ascribing experiential lives to others, which involves rendering their subjective experience in words.

Oddly enough though, Nagel did not intend to ignite an anymal minds discussion. He merely uses the bat as an example with which to show that there is something like being a bat. At the same time, however, it is immediately clear that for Nagel we cannot and will never know *what* it is like to be a bat. Expressed in Nagel's terminology: the bat example shows us that even though subjective experience is real, it is overlooked by the theories of consciousness that were mainstream in the 70s when Nagel penned the article. This is partly down to the fact that we cannot form a concept of bats' subjective experience – we can neither do so of humans' subjective experience for that matter.[10]

Bats are an apt example with which to demonstrate this, Nagel argues, because their experiential lives differ completely from ours, mainly due to their ability to echolocate. Yet, at the same time, he assumes that bats, being mammals, are close enough to humans in the phylogenetic tree to ascribe conscious experiences to them. Nagel presents the reason for choosing the bat as an example by way of a truism: "anyone who has spent some time in an enclosed space with an excited bat knows what it is to encounter a fundamentally alien form

10 In the first footnote to his article, Nagel mentions some leading philosophers who represent the two then-prevailing theories of consciousness. These theories are *identity theory*, according to which brain and consciousness are identical, and *physicalism* (or *materialism*), which holds the view that somehow the mind is reducible to the brain.

of life" (438). With this aside, Nagel assumes that he has sufficiently substantiated his choice of a bat and proceeds to tell us what he actually cares about: the incompleteness of theories of consciousness. Even if Nagel does not consider his example to be the focal point of his argument it still is, however, central to his text. If his selection is based on the wrong assumptions, then the whole of his argument might fall down. Let us first consider Nagel's argument more thoroughly before coming to the role that the bat example plays in it.

According to Nagel, subjective or phenomenal consciousness is such an intricate matter for two reasons. On the one hand, it cannot be reimagined by someone else for our imagination is bound to a single point of view. On the other, it cannot be an object of science for its phenomenality escapes the language of objectivity. Imagine that I see the colour blue. Scientists can look in my brain to establish whether the primary and secondary visual areas show activity. On this basis they can offer a description of my brain activity. However, they cannot see my *experience* of the colour blue. They will not find a blue picture in my head and, even if they would, they still would miss *my* specific experience of it in their descriptions. Philosophers who claim that there is a problem of other minds call the description of the brain activity 'the third-person perspective' and my actual seeing of the colour blue 'the first-person perspective'. We have individual subjective experiences from this first-person perspective; the way that *I* see a colour or the way that *I* experience sadness. These experiences are called '*qualia*' (singular '*quale*'). They are ineffable since everyday and (even more so) scientific language aims at shared understanding, which results in purposely omitting the most individual experiences.

If we were to describe these experiences as if they were physical, objective processes (or: from a third-person perspective), then we would leave out the 'what it is like for me', which is the essence of experience. When we say that the sciences strive for objectivity, we need to assume that subjectivity has no place in them. Conversely, the sciences' inability to capture the subjective standpoint (the first-person perspective and its *qualia*), has led some philosophers to deny the existence of the first-person perspective, arguing that subjective experience is as effable as any other physical fact. Consequently, they also deny that there is a problem with knowing other minds.[11]

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11 Daniel Dennett proposes "heterophenomenology" as a method with which to capture the first-person point of view without abandoning the third-person perspective (*Consciousness*). In this method, a researcher narrates (from a third-person perspective) the subject's phenomenology, addressing not only the subject's own reports of how he is feeling or what he is thinking, but also behaviour, bodily responses, what is shown in MRI tests, and any other data related to the subject's experience. Above all, Dennett wants to avoid Descartes' conception of subjects as being able to give infallible and omniscient accounts of their own phenomenal experience. According to Dennett, we cannot.

Note that the designations 'first-person perspective' and 'third-person perspective' are common in literary theory as well as philosophy. We refer to a narrative written from a first-person perspective when the reader sees events through the eyes of the 'I' in the story. A narrative is written from a third-person perspective when the author uses the pronoun 'he', 'she', or in rare cases 'they' to describe the protagonist(s) and the reader gets to know the protagonist(s) through descriptions seen from the narrator's perspective. In the consciousness debate these terms are used in a largely similar way, but there are also differences. In philosophy, a first-person perspective describes what something is like to me – my subjective experience *from the inside* – whereas a third-person perspective describes the world seen *from the outside*. In novels, the third-person perspective, although it belongs to an outsider, may still include a character's inner experiences. An omniscient narrator in a literary work, for instance, knows what it is like for someone to be that someone, even though the narrative is written from the third-person perspective.[12]

Whether we regard these descriptions as truthful insights into the minds of others depends on whether we believe that imagination can surpass the cage of our own mind and that characters in novels live independently from their creator and are comparable to humans in real life. Again, we might easily leave these matters aside when the others are humans, but Nagel's aim is to explore specifically the boundaries of our conceptual abilities and not leave other mind matters aside.

To establish a clear view of these boundaries, Nagel invites us to imagine being a creature with experiences of the world that are very distinct from our own, namely a bat. Bats are like us in that they have experiences, he claims, but they are also vastly different, not least because they hear the world by way of echolocation. He argues that if we could reduce the mind to the body, there would be nothing more to say about the conscious experience of being a bat than an enumeration of its measurable, material parts. In principle, we could reproduce those parts. From a materialist perspective, the only thing that one would have to do in order to have bat-like experiences would be to create an ultrasound device for human beings and rewire our brains to match the bat device. However, even such a device would not go past the privateness of subjective experience, for even then, according to Nagel, this would only provide

12 The close relation between novels (and indeed narratives in general) and empathy has been widely studied. See, for instance, Aristotle (1902); Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*; Zunshine; Hammond and Kim; Walton; and John, "Empathy", as well as research based on empirical data: Coplan, "Empathic Engagement", Keen (2010, 2019), and Caracciolo (2016).

an answer to the question what it would be like for *me* to "fly around at dusk and dawn catching insects in one's mouth".

> … In so far as I can imagine this (which is not very far), it tells me only what it would be like for *me* to behave as a bat behaves. But that is not the question. I want to know what it is like for a *bat* to be a bat. Yet if I try to imagine this, I am restricted to the resources of my own mind, and those resources are inadequate to the task. (439)

Sticking to the thought experiment, Nagel shows that mimicking the sensory input and behaving like a bat would not be enough to describe a bat's consciousness. At first reading, Nagel's choice of a bat as his example seems confusing, since his point is that humans' subjective experience has no place in a reductionist theory of consciousness. According to Nagel, however, a creature with sensory experiences beyond our ken shows us all the more clearly that we are confined to the cage of our own mind. He assumes that readers will immediately accept that we never can see the world from the point of view of a bat. In trying to imagine experiencing the world from whoever's point of view, we will only experience what *we ourselves* would experience if we were in their place. In the language of recent discussions about empathy and knowing what others' experiences are like, the imaginative process that Nagel describes in the quotation above would be seen as an instance of what is called 'imagine-self' perspective taking: *I* imagine what it is like for me to fly around. In contrast with this, Nagel thinks that 'imagine-other' perspective taking, in which I am imagining the world from *the other's* point of view, to be an impossibility.[13] Because the imagination is limited to the resources of the mind, says Nagel, we cannot imagine the other.

Before turning to reactions to this seminal article, let me summarise Nagel's argument: if I try to conceptualise a bat's subjective experience, I must know what it is like for a bat to be a bat. I cannot know this by means of the imagination, for the source of my imagination is my own experiential makeup and its range is therefore limited. Furthermore, I cannot capture a bat's subjective experience by way of scientific methods, which, by dint of tradition, assume a third-person perspective. According to Nagel, then, it seems that it is impossible to know what it is like for a bat to be a bat.[14]

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13 On the distinction between 'imagine-self' and 'imagine-other' perspective taking, see Vorauer and Sasaki and Batson et al..

1.3 Attempts to capture the "what it is like"

Nagel's aim in "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" is neither to formulate an answer to the titular question, to contribute to the discussion about the problem of anymal minds, nor even to underscore his epistemological scepticism with regard to other minds.[15] Many researchers engaged with different questions still refer to the bat example, however, because of its cogence. For instance, the philosopher Kristin Andrews reflects on the bat example and reiterates its implications:

> Thomas Nagel famously argued that we can't know what it's like to be a bat because humans are so different from bats both physically and socially, and the best we can do is to imagine what it would be like for *us* to be bat-like. (*Animal Mind* 5)

The science journalist Virginia Morell also refers to Nagel. She not only assumes that he is right, but that scientists agree about him being right:

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14 At the end of the paper, Nagel does speculate about the possibility of what he calls an "objective phenomenology", which would attempt to describe the experiences of "beings incapable of having those experiences" (449). Nagel insists that such a method should proceed without recourse to empathy or the imagination and go beyond the point of metaphor or simile, stressing that one would not use the simile "red is like the sound of a trumpet" in describing colour to someone who is blind. In my view, Nagel dismisses the role of simile and metaphor far too quickly, in a way that assumes another gap, namely the gap between objectivity and the imagination. For a critical discussion of the supposed gap between metaphor and world, see section 4.3.2 on biosemiotics.

15 It is only in a footnote that Nagel recognises the mind-body discussion's close connection to the problem of other minds. He notes that here too we do not understand what it means for "subjective experience to have an objective nature" (448, footnote 14). If we could, then we would not have a problem of other minds.

> What is it like to be a fish? Or a bird, bat, bee, or tiger? The scientific consensus holds that we will never know exactly what it is like to be any anymal; as much as we would like to, and despite all of our intensive studies, we can never fully understand another animal's experience of the world. And yet, when the scientists at a 1991 international gathering of ethologists were each asked why they had elected to study a particular species, they overwhelmingly responded that their primary motivation was the desire to know what it was like to be that animal. (49)

Even though scientists say that they are motivated by a desire to explore anymal worlds, Morell accepts that someone else's subjective experience represents a final frontier. The biologist Frans de Waal also seems to resign himself to this view when he writes: "Nagel did not seek to know how a human would feel as a bat: he wanted to understand how a bat feels like a bat. This is indeed beyond our comprehension". De Waal explains this in terms of the other famous illustration of this experiential divide, Wittgenstein's lion, which was intended to demonstrate "our limited ability to enter the inner lives of others" (*Smart* 9).

When reading these writers' works, however, it gradually becomes clearer and clearer that they assume that our subjective experience is 'inner', fundamentally ineffable, and therefore inexpressible in terms of scientific fact. Indeed, after endorsing Nagel's view in the passages I have quoted, they give extended examples of the ways in which humans *can* and in fact *do* know anymal minds. Andrews emphasises that anymals (including humans) are different from one another, certainly, but that they "in other ways may be the same" (*Animal Mind* 5). Coming to know these differences and similarities, she suggests, entails undertaking research in various scientific disciplines, with a keen eye for biases (Andrews, *How*).

It is interesting to see that Morell, in the quotation from her book given above, rephrases Nagel's "what is it like" in terms of an attempt to "understand the animal's experience of the world". Reformulating Nagel in this way leaves out the anymal's subjective experience of "what it is like", which makes the reformulated question answerable in principle. And indeed, Morell continues by giving the example of a neuroscientist with "the urge to enter … the mind of fish". His "journey to understand the minds of fish", she writes, "has taken him into the very cells of a fish's brain where the decisions of life and death are made" (49). Finally, Frans de Waal points out that Nagel contradicts himself in putting his trust in science when it comes to the search for a bat's subjective experience. For it is science that has taught him something about the use of echolocation in bats and thus allowed him to know something about what it is like to be a bat (*Smart* 9-10).

De Waal, Andrews, and Morell stand as examples of how researchers think that they can tackle Nagel's problem: in order to experience what, say, a dolphin is experiencing, they take it to be enough to describe their behaviour through tests. Here too it shows how scientists vacillate between the sceptical and interpretative stances, wavering between claiming that one cannot know anything about the "what it is like" (De Waal's "this is indeed beyond our comprehension") and asserting that consciousness is not entirely tucked away in a mysterious inner world and that tests do tell us something about subjective experience. This back-and-forth movement indicates that the definition of subjective experience might be unclear, that assumptions in the problem may be wrong, or indeed both. I discuss the latter possibility at the end of this section.

Rather than describing anymal consciousness from a third-person point of view in the hope of capturing "what it is like" from the first-person perspective, we might instead question the assumptions on which Nagel builds his argument. This is the approach taken by the philosopher Daniel Dennett, for instance in his study *Consciousness Explained* (1991). Dennett claims that Nagel's famous sentence "I want to know what it is like for *a bat* to be a bat" is based on Cartesian dualism. According to Dennett, the Cartesian view works with the false assumption that there is some kind of place in the brain where all of our experiences come together in a non-material mind:

> Cartesian materialism is the view that there is a crucial finish line or boundary somewhere in the brain, marking a place where the order of arrival equals the order of "presentation" in experience because *what happens there* is what you are conscious of. (107)

It is this assumed boundary somewhere in the brain that makes Nagel's phrase "what it is like for a bat to be a bat" possible, since it expresses the conviction that experiences and the bat are divided. For Dennett, this distinction between experiences on the one hand and the person having the experiences on the other reflects Descartes' idea of the soul, which centres on experiences in the brain and is therefore nothing more than a modern version of the old mind-body dualism. However, no one has ever located this central place, either in the brain or anywhere else. From which it follows that ineffable, private, and subjective experience – closed off behind some sort of boundary – does not exist ("Animal Consciousness" 702). According to Dennett, the problem of other minds is based on untenable Cartesian presuppositions. In short, he holds that there is no such thing as a problem of other minds and a bat's subjective experience can

be the object of science. What is more, like De Waal, Dennett argues that even Nagel himself leans on science in approaching others' subjective experience:

> [I]f a few such facts can establish something about bat consciousness, would more such facts not establish more? He has already relied on "objective, third-person" scientific investigation to establish (or at least render rationally credible) the hypothesis that bats are conscious, but not in just the way we are. Why wouldn't further such facts be able to tell us in exactly what ways bats' consciousness isn't like ours, thereby telling us what it is like to be a bat? ("Animal Consciousness" 693-694)

Dennett's criticism of Nagel helps to understand why it is possible to move back and forth between scepticism and interpretation. First of all, Dennett claims that the image of a Cartesian theatre with a conscious tiny you as the spectator is very attractive and "keeps coming back to haunt us – laypeople and scientists alike – even after its ghostly dualism has been denounced and exorcised" (*Consciousness* 107). This image of a hidden, conscious, and tiny you, which is implicit in the problem of other minds, is what creates an abyss. This is because the self behind the boundary is, for Descartes and Nagel, ultimately beyond our ken. Second, if consciousness is understood in a Cartesian way, then our bodies become machines in which our minds are encaged, instead of being minds in action. When minds are seen as hidden, falling back on scepticism seems obvious, because no amount of work will bring others' experiential worlds nearer. However, if the others in question are similar to us, we commonsensically assume our arguments from analogy to be correct without a second thought.

Thanks to Dennett's tracing of the Cartesian remnants in Nagel's work, we now can formulate five claims that recur in discussions of the problem of anymal minds. They are connected in that they presume or follow from one another:

1. Selves and experiences are distinct;
2. There is an unbridgeable gap between selves;
3. This gap is only credibly crossed when the selves in question are similar;
4. Neither the imagination nor the sciences can bridge the gap between minds (though for different reasons); and
5. Subjective experience is ultimately ineffable.

The assumed unbridgeability of the gap between minds depends to a significant degree on the idea of a boundary separating selves. Unless the minds

involved are similar, this boundary is taken to determine the inadequacy of both my imagination and attempts to infer other minds by way of analogy.

For Dennett, there is no line or boundary hiding mysterious, ineffable *qualia*. A third-person perspective can therefore offer us a view on subjective experience. In fact, he sees science as the only place in which we should be looking for answers, even if we wish to glimpse others' individual subjectivities. Dennett writes dismissively about Elizabeth Marshall Thomas' biographical account of her life with her dogs, *The Hidden Life of Dogs* (1993):

> If you want to *believe* in the consciousness of dogs, her poetry is just the ticket. If you want to *know* about the consciousness of dogs, you have to admit that although she raises many good questions, her answers are not to be trusted. ("Animal Consciousness" 692)

Dennett speaks about poetry in a derogative manner, positioning the field in opposition to science. Although he might see the binary of immaterial soul versus material body as untenable, this passage suggests that another binary is still very much alive: that of science versus poetry. This makes it all the more remarkable that Dennett, perhaps unintentionally, nuances these sharp remarks about Thomas's book by praising Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* for raising exemplary scientific questions. Dennett is right to stress that we need a non-binary approach to anymals if we are to be able to enter their worlds. However, we also need to address other binaries that close off anymals' worlds and tackle existing conceptual paradigms head on. When taking the experiencing anymal seriously as a body-mind, poetry figuring anymals can no longer be seen as "a healing lotion, an emotional massage, a kind of linguistic aromatherapy" as Adrienne Rich so aptly described poetry in general (21).

1.4 Feeling what it is like: The empathy debate

The phrase '*knowing* what it is like' has to do with the epistemological and conceptual problem of anymal minds. The idea of imagining taking a different perspective ultimately goes beyond forming a concept of knowing what it is like. When we undergo the sadness that someone else is experiencing (because they have told us about sadness in their life, for instance), we *experience* rather than merely *know* what the emotion is like for them. Experiencing an emotion that is "more appropriate to the state or situation of someone other than the person who experiences it" is called empathy (Maibom, *Empathy* 2). Empathy is regarded as a bridge between minds. Indeed, when you and I experience the same emotion, we inadvertently refute the sceptical position, for at that moment we understand what it is like for someone to be that someone (that is, within the scope of the emotion in question).

The subject of empathy is widely discussed amongst various scholars, from philosophers and psychologists to neuroscientists and aesthetic theorists. It is such a thought-provoking subject, I would suggest, because the idea that we can undergo each other's experiences contrasts with the atomised social worldview which has prevailed for many years.[16] The groundbreaking discovery of mirror neurons in 1991 seemed to indicate that empathy is hardwired in us and that empathetic skills are not acquired through reasoning, but in a rough form given to us by nature. Apparently, we do not function as separate islands, but are connected to each other at even a neuronal level.[17] 'Feeling with' may not

16 See for a discussion and definition of social atomism: Taylor.

17 Giacomo Rizzolatti and his colleagues have found that neurons in the brains of macaque monkeys fired both when they performed a given action and when they saw a researcher performing the action. In 1995, Rizzolatti coined the term 'mirror neurons' for this phenomenon. Since then, we have learned that humans and songbirds also mirror others at a neuronal level (see Rizzolatti et al.). Furthermore, these neurons mirror emotions as well as goal-oriented actions (see Keysers and Gazzola).

be a mere possibility, but the way in which we start our lives and a fundamental part of how we learn. If so, then we need to rethink our ideas about having to cross an abyss to know what it is like to be another person.

Empathy can be said to bridge the gap between selves, thereby refuting claim 2 in the list presented in section 1.3. However, this does not imply that the other claims fall down too. In broad strokes, discussions in the empathy debate focus on the need for similarities between separate selves for real empathy. As such, they often turn on the extent to which *qualia* must match up. This has resulted in a number of attempts to conceptualise the fine line between projection and empathic accuracy. The role of cognition in these discussions is intricate: some researchers claim that cognition is a necessary prerequisite for empathy (Coplan and Goldie; Maibom, "Introduction" and 2019); were that not the case, I would just experience emotional contagion, not empathy. Others are not so strict (Zahavi, "Phenomenology"; Currie).

For my line of thought, it is instructive to dwell on the main distinctions that are made in the empathy debate before turning to how poetic figures of anymals deconstruct them. The default definition of empathy concerns humans and accuracy in matching emotions. At a fundamental level, however, there is disagreement about whether it is best to strive for unity in finding a definition of empathy (Preston and De Waal 2) or more specificity, as befits various fields of inquiry (Coplan "Understanding" 5). The many different strands of this debate might seem off-putting to those interested in empathy, but it may also be that the incompatibilities among various definitions of empathy are somewhat exaggerated, as the philosopher Heidi Maibom argues ("Introduction" 1). As a solution to the divisions with which the debate is riven, she puts forward Martin Hoffman's general characterisation of empathy, which applies to both its cognitive and affective forms: "an emotion that is more appropriate to the state or situation of someone other than the person who experiences it" ("Introduction" 2).

Distinguishing cognitive from affective empathy is standard practice in the empathy debate. Whereas cognitive empathy is thought to include all forms of understanding others by mentally assuming their perspective, affective empathy involves instances of "emotion-matching, other-oriented and other-caused emotional states" (Maibom "Introduction" 1). Following from these generic forms of empathy is the contrast between other-caused and -oriented emotional states, which we *know* are caused by others, and instances of emotional states that we 'forget' are caused by others. This is because they either blur the distinction between oneself and another or focus more on one's own distress

caused by someone else's pain, as is the case with personal distress.[18] Maibom is quite definite that it is cognition that turns these self-oriented emotions into other-oriented emotions. Maibom suggests that it is only by way of a thought process that I am able to become aware of the reason that I am feeling what I am feeling and conclude that it is because of someone else ("Understanding" 5). She claims that affective empathy, sympathy, emotional contagion, and personal distress are all emotional states that one can label as empathic (*Routledge Handbook* 22).

Amy Coplan's position is less inclusive. She wishes to reserve the name 'empathy' for a "high-level process", which she defines in the following way:

> [E]mpathy is a complex imaginative process in which an observer simulates another person's situated psychological states while maintaining a clear self-other differentiation. To say empathy is 'complex' is to say that it is simultaneously a cognitive and affective process. ("Understanding" 5)

Empathy is affective in the sense that it entails experiencing an emotion, but it must also be a cognitive process if we are to distinguish it from emotional contagion:

> One of the key differences between emotional contagion and empathy is that contagion is a direct, automatic, unmediated process. Empathy is never fully unmediated since it requires perspective-taking. Roughly, perspective-taking is an imaginative process through which one constructs another person's subjective experience by simulating the experience of being in the other's situation. ("Understanding" 9)

For Coplan it is out of the question that perspective taking and imagining what it is like for another in her situation might be a cognitive process. Empathy cannot be unmediated, for that would blur the distinction between oneself and another. Acknowledging the other, who has "his own unique thoughts, feelings, desires and characteristics … prevent[s] one from losing sight of where the self ends and the other begins and where the other ends and the self begins" (16). And thus, finally, empathy requires that selves are similar, according to Coplan, because "the more unlike the target we are, the more difficult it is to reconstruct her subjective experiences" ("Understanding" 13).

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18 Distinctions between self and other are blurred, for example, in cases of emotional contagion – I might 'catch' someone's sadness, but be oblivious to the cause of the sadness that I now feel.

What becomes clear in both Maibom's and Coplan's approaches is that cognitive processes are indispensable for experiencing empathy (since otherwise we cannot distinguish our experience from someone else's). From this follows the need for separate selves and finally for the emotions of these separate selves to match up by imaginatively taking one another's perspective. Here we can see that the themes of Nagel's discussion of the bat example are present in these modern definitions of empathy as well.

Despite presenting empathy as a bridge between minds, these definitions presuppose the idea of separate, matching selves, which again reinforces the sceptical attitude towards other minds with which I started this chapter. This scepticism is based on Cartesian dualism. Even though the idea of a free-floating Cartesian spirit is becoming ever-less tenable in a world in which the brain's functions are more and more assessed, it would seem that we find it hard to discard the terminology that comes with it. In Coplan's view we host *high-level* processes, which deserve the label of empathy, and *low-level* processes, which are automatic mirrorings. It is no coincidence that the former processes are connected with thinking and the latter with the body – again a reflection of Cartesian dualism.[19] We say that we '*have* experiences', that we 'cannot *access* other minds' (which are apparently hidden, somewhere behind a boundary), that we '*deduce* a mind from behaviour' – all these expressions assert an 'I' that is separate from experiences or even a mind separate from a body.

19 De Vignemont and Jacob refute the idea of there being a high-level versus a low-level process in a way that reflects critique on Descartes' distinction between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. They argue that although mirroring pain is related to so-called low-level processes, experiments by Cheng et al. have shown that medical practitioners do not mirror a patient's pain if they believe the pain is meant to heal the patient or a painful body part is anaesthetised. These experiments show that body and mind are not that easily distinguished.

1.5 Phenomenology and poetry

The task of challenging scepticism concerning other minds starts with methodically throwing Cartesian binaries overboard. The school of phenomenology has the edge in that department. In recent years many researchers have pointed out that we are already in relationships with anymals (Gruen), that we do not exist in separate universes but share a world, as the philosopher Elisa Aaltola has put it: "[m]inds enmesh; how others feel and think affects my own mindedness and vice versa. Nobody is locked into their private, internal spheres but rather they experience things with and as a result of each other" (*Varieties* 47). These formulations of embodied empathy can be traced back to phenomenology. Aaltola shows us how embodiment necessarily denies the problem of anymal minds:

> 'The problem of opacity of other minds' is often argued to limit empathy …, as it is presumed that the mental states of others are, indeed, hidden into private subjectivity and that any empathic understanding of them is bound to be projective. As suggested earlier, such criticism is also common in the context of other animals, as claims of empathic understanding are often dismissed as pure anthropomorphic projection, wherein one misleadingly transports a human self into a pig or a dog. Here, the human is the reference point against whose image all understanding of non-humans is reflected – the presumption that we cannot "know" dogness or pigness, and that in claims of such knowledge, we are merely seeing ourselves mirrored in these animals. Such a take on empathy stems from a misconception, according to which "selves" are wholly isolated from others, their inner realms inaccessible. The solution is to replace this misconception with noting that we are, indeed, connected by embodiment capable of expressing and understand-

> ing mindedness – something that also applies in relation to other animals. (*Varieties* 105)

Note that the presuppositions I enumerated in response to Nagel's article are critically addressed in the quotation above: selves are not to be seen as atoms or islands, we are fundamentally connected, and mindedness is embodied. Thus subjective experience is effable and imaginable, including when the others are anymals.

Many phenomenologists start by refuting the Cartesian body-mind distinction and developing a vocabulary that befits this new worldview. A passage from one of the most famous phenomenologists, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, serves as an anticipatory response to Nagel's conclusion. In his posthumously published *Nature: Course Notes from the Collège de France*, Merleau-Ponty commits to neither materialism nor dualism:

> the organism is not a sum of instantaneous and punctual microscopic events; it is an enveloping phenomenon, with the macroscopic style of an ensemble in movement. In between the microscopic facts, global reality is delineated like a watermark, never graspable for objectivizing-particular thinking, never eliminable from or reducible to the microscopic. (207)

A watermark – the word that stands out in this paragraph – can neither be seen under a microscope, because we would lose the form that gives the body direction out of sight, nor is it a free-floating idea of a mind setting a body in motion. Merleau-Ponty thinks both views on nature fall short of how nature works. On Descartes' view, nature develops, moves, and envelops automatically and mechanically, pushed forward by causes. Humans are the only exception to this, because of the *res cogitans*, which is immaterial. The rest of nature can only be grasped mechanically. According to Merleau-Ponty, however, this cannot explain how our behaviour is structured. By viewing the body not merely as a mechanism that has to be put into motion by a mind, Merleau-Ponty paves the way for a view on the body-mind problem, since he explains that the body must be seen as "a take on the exterior world. It follows from this that there is no difference between the organization of the body and behaviour, since the body is defined as the place of behaviour". The idea of the body being a "take on the exterior world" – Arnold Gesell's phrase – is meant to clarify that for Merleau-Ponty there is no distinct boundary between behaviour and mind. There cannot be, for our minds are embodied: "thus there is an indivision of my body, of my body and the world, of my body and other bodies, and of other bodies between them". From this it follows that our subjective experience does

not hide inside of our brains; it is present in a shared social world, since there is no boundary in our brain that determines "where behaviour begins and where mind ends" (*Nature* 146, 279, 207).

This idea truly breaks with the Cartesian tradition. No body can be seen as merely a machine controlled by a separate mind. In abandoning Cartesian dualism, we need to think of the bodies that we encounter instead as body-minds. This may seem strange, since our cultural jargon reflects a division between the two. As we go about our daily lives, however, we trust that others are body-minds. Ask anyone who works in relation to others: a teacher, for instance, who knows if a student does not understand her merely by looking at their expression, or a dog owner who unthinkingly adapts the route of his walk in response to the dog's unmistakable communications, conveyed through the leash.

Hence, if we are not the self-encapsulated islands that Descartes thought us to be, then the idea that matching is a prerequisite for empathy falls away. This claim is put forward by the contemporary phenomenologist Dan Zahavi. He says that we do not really know what must match up with: in any case, one must have feelings somewhat like the target's feelings, but to what extent? Can our feelings be similar when we are dissimilar? Or can the empathiser understand the target even when they did not go through the same experience? Almost casually, Zahavi remarks: "After all, everything else resembles everything else in some respect" ("Phenomenology" 36). This suggests that the notion of similarity and consequently matching is vague; at an epistemological level, everything else is indeed like everything else or as different as you choose. In view of this, the question becomes what the notion of matching contributes to the discussion about empathy. When we decide that some creatures are distinctly dissimilar and that we cannot know them because of their dissimilarity, the decision takes place at an epistemological level. As such, the idea of matching tells us only about our distinctions, not necessarily about the world.[20] Zahavi proposes a solution that starts by focusing on moments at which we do know what is going on with someone else:

> We can see the other's elation or doubt, surprise or attentiveness in his or her face, we can hear the other's trepidation, impatience, or bewilderment in her voice, we feel the other's enthusiasm in his handshake, grasp his mood in his posture, and see her determination and persistence in her actions. ("Phenomenology" 40)

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20 I explore the idea that similarity is a matter of choice rather than a fact of nature in chapter 3.

Seeing instead of *inferring* other's elation, doubt, or indeed any emotion is the necessary outcome of the mind and body's indivisibility. Zahavi's argument in this passage has become known as a direct perception argument concerning other minds. This argument proposes that since we do not have a mind separate from our body, our intentions and feelings are not expressed in our postures or facial features. Indeed, bodily stances and behaviours cannot be seen apart or otherwise separated from our feelings. Furthermore, Zahavi states that the way to learn about other people's minds (even those that we deem dissimilar to our own) and undergo their experiences (even those that we have not had ourselves) is simply to "spend time together" ("Phenomenology" 37).

Apparently, if we put aside the idea of empathy taking place within someone's body, but rather focus on the space between ourselves and the other, then it is possible to attain "an expressive understanding" thanks to "bodily proximity" ("Phenomenology" 42). This gives rise to a very different definition of empathy, in which the need for matching emotions and separate selves has been taken out of the equation. In fact, in phenomenology the prerequisite of proximity outweighs similarity. Aaltola points out that phenomenology has a huge advantage over our default definitions of empathy in that it does not diminish anymals' alterity in order to fit any matching: embodied empathy involves openness towards and the recognition of difference, allowing us to acknowledge the alterity of other animals (*Varieties* 121). The fact that empathy is about proximity rather than about similarity calls for another understanding of empathy, no longer premised on matching emotions. What is more, leaving behind the Cartesian divide, which entails a conception of atomistic selves projecting themselves onto others, paves the way for empathy with anymals. Indeed, for Merleau-Ponty, anymals and humans share the landscapes that they inhabit. In his philosophy, bodies no longer present an abyss that we simply cannot cross:

> Now why would this generality, which constitutes the unity of my body, not open it to other bodies? The handshake too is reversible; I can feel myself touched as well and at the same time as touching … Why would not the synergy exist among different organisms, if it is possible within each? Their landscapes interweave, their actions and their passions fit together exactly: this is possible as soon as we no longer make belongingness to one same "consciousness" the primordial definition of sensibility, and as soon as we rather understand it as the return of the visible upon itself, a carnal adherence of the sentient to the sensed and of the sensed to the sentient. (*Visible* 142)

"Interweaving landscapes": this phrase is a far cry from the I-other distinction in Nagel's account and standard definitions of empathy. For Merleau-Ponty, even consciousness is not fixed to a brain but rather emerges through an exchange between the subject and its *Umwelt* (a notion I address in chapter 3). The notion of interweaving landscapes and bodies open to manifold relations with the world requires scrutinising the ways of researching others' experiences and especially claims that selves are separated by an unbridgeable abyss. Empathy, as Zahavi understands the notion, has far more to do with our attitude than with the other belonging to the same species; he claims that empathy is a state of *perception*. It is a trained mode of perception, however, in that we only see body-subjects when we "treat … bodies as a field of expression for their experiences", as Max Scheler proposes (qtd. in Aaltola *Varieties* 108). Reading and interpreting zoopoems offers a way to train our perception, as will become clear in the following chapters.

Let me conclude this section with three observations. Firstly, the notion of 'openness' is absent in the standard definition of empathy, whereas phenomenology emphasises it time and again. Phenomenological thinkers underscore the idea that empathy is a matter of training the ability of perception in the subject rather than matching one's affect with the object's. Perception, as the Merleau-Ponty scholar Louise Westling writes in referring to James Gibson "is not the achievement of a mind in a body but rather of a whole organism in its explanatory movement through the world" (*Logos* 7). A consequence of understanding the mind as embodied is that *meaning* is no longer merely something that humans add to the world. If we see ourselves as organisms who, rather than being siloed off from the rest of nature, find their way in the world in an expressive, perceiving manner, then we must look for the – already existing – relations we have with anymals' expressive embodied behaviours.

Secondly, spending time together is more important for embodied empathy than in the standard definition of empathy. It is through bodily proximity that we can simultaneously enjoy each other's alterity and vicariously undergo each other's experiences. My subsequent question is whether we can enjoy such bodily proximity through reading zoopoetry. This idea has been put forward by John Coetzee in his novella *The Lives of Animals*, which is the subject of the final section of this chapter.

Lastly, following up on the idea of meeting anymals through reading zoopoetry, it is important to note that in phenomenology the way to train openness and see connectedness is to engage in the visual arts and poetry. However, even though phenomenological thought has become increasingly important in empathy studies, work in this field does not reflect the significance that phenomenologists accord poetry (Maibom 2019). Likewise, in the aesthetic

empathy debate poetry does not generally receive much attention. Instead, narratives are the standard choice for thinking about empathy through literature. Poetry, however, suffers less from the anthropomorphism inherent in narratives – a claim I defend in the next chapter – in that rhythm, rhyme, and inventive imagery are favoured over character development, plot, and propositional language.

In phenomenology, poetry, anymality, and empathy are closely linked. In a chapter with the telling title "Language is Everywhere" from her monograph *The Logos of the Living World*, Louise Westling articulates these connections in the following way: "we are embodied creatures caught up in a world that is full of meaning and language. For [Merleau-Ponty], 'the whole landscape is overrun with words'" (101). When all of nature carries meaning, then we must indeed "learn to speak with nature in its own language", as the biologist Jesper Hoffmeyer has put it(qtd. in Westling 143). Poetry sets an example by way of de-binarised reflections, by seeing anymals as a whole, without charging them with the need for character development. Furthermore, both phenomenology and poetry are attentive to the world as it is given in experience. In this way, both fields seek to grasp not only *what* experiences are but also *how* they are experienced. Unfolding *how* something is experienced calls for hyper-concrete words and phrases, rather than abstract terminology, and demands staying as close as possible to the individual. As Luke Fischer explains:

> A certain person tends to walk with a lightness of step, to hold a cup in a delicate manner, to speak eloquently and with a tone that seems to echo the person's gait. Another person walks with a heavy gait, articulates things more slowly – his intonation has a reflective physiognomy and he proceeds with tasks at a measured pace, etc. In each case, a distinctive how is reflected in many variations across different forms of manifestation or *Leiblichkeit*. The attempt to *conceptualize* these phenomena inevitably remains to a certain extent generic. In the *Lebenswelt*, however, we often note that a person has a specific gesture or manner which is absolutely typifying and singular. The smallest gesture can manifest a special *thisness* or *haecceity*. (59)

It is this *thisness* that poets try to save from abstraction, I would say.[21] Which means that, in the case of zoopoetry, the possibilities of language are pushed to its limits on account of the alterity of anymals' *thisness*. Poetry uses language in a way that philosophy ideally would too – a way that would "not try to hold things as with forceps," as Merleau-Ponty has it, "or to immobilize them as under the objective of a microscope, but to let them be and to witness their continued being" (*Visible* 101). This is why poetry, as Luke Fischer claims, "in certain respects … can address a philosophical problem better than philosophy itself" (1).

I start my quest to grasp the relation between zoopoetry and empathy with one of the pivotal texts in animal studies, *The Lives of Animals* (1999) by John Coetzee.[22] To my mind, this metafictional novella is a phenomenological investigation into how anymal lives can be rescued from scepticism through the study of poetry. Both directly and indirectly, it questions many of the binaries with which we subconsciously work.

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21 This view is shared by the poet Elizabeth Bishop, who writes the following to Donald Stanford: "Have you ever noticed that you can learn more about other people – more about how they feel, how it would feel to be them – by hearing them cough or make one of the innumerable inner noises, than by watching them for hours? Sometimes if another person hiccups, particularly if you haven't been paying much attention tot him, why you get a sudden sensation as if you were inside him – you know how he feels in the little aspects he never mentions, aspects which are, really, indescribable to another person and must be realized by that kind of intuition. Do you know what I am driving at? Well if you can follow those rather hazy sentences – that's what I quite often want to get into poetry …" (*One* 18)

22 Not only is *Lives* influential in the anymal rights movement (see for instance Peter Singer and Randy Malamud); it has also shaped the course of many investigations into the relationship between poetry and anymals (see for instance Michael Malay and Onno Oerlemans).

1.6 "Walking flank to flank": The boundless imagination in *The Lives of Animals*

Holding onto a first-person perspective in a reductionist account of consciousness seemed scientifically unviable, according to Nagel. In *Science and Poetry*, the philosopher Mary Midgley advocates for "The Return of the First Person" (117). That said, it is not that easy to assert the reality of the first person without lapsing into the mystery of an ineffable *quale*. Embodiment, as it is celebrated by phenomenologists, must be the essential part of such a plea.

John Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals* gives us a thought-through account of what it means to regard anymals not merely as mysterious, mechanical, or alien, but as body subjects. The protagonist Elizabeth Costello claims that in order to see anymals like humans we need the power of poetry. In the novella (if that is the right way to label the book, as I will discuss shortly) Costello gives two lectures at the philosophy faculty where her son and daughter-in-law work. The character makes an appearance in three of Coetzee's works: *Slow Man* (2005), *Elizabeth Costello* (2003), and *The Lives of Animals* (2000). Perhaps calling her a 'fictional character' does not entirely do her justice. Given that she outlives the boundaries of three books, Costello is not a fictional character in the same way as, for instance, Anna Karenina is. She is often considered to be Coetzee's alter ego, which may be interesting in itself. Still, the character of Elizabeth Costello is more than that; by showing that the boundaries between poetry and world are not easily drawn, she embodies the novella's theme. *The Lives of Animals* (hereafter *Lives*) is neither an academic essay nor a recording of Coetzee himself speaking.[23] One might say that it is an example of 'inter-

23 This again shows the hybridity of the multi-layered work, given that Coetzee originally presented *Lives* as a lecture, held as part of the Tanner Lectures on Human Values (Princeton University, 15 and 16 October 1997).

genre-ality'. This becomes important when talking about the possibility of empathy, which I will address later on.

In *Lives*, Costello is the main guest at a conference. An esteemed novelist, she is free to talk about whatever she prefers. Her lectures and the discussions that follow comprise the main part of the novella. On the first day of the conference she talks about "The Philosophers and The Animals" and on the second day about "The Poets and The Animals" (the division brings to mind the old quarrel between philosophy and poetry).[24] Thomas Nagel's bat example plays an important role in the first lecture. Costello finds Nagel's conclusion, namely that "I cannot know what it is for a bat to be bat-like", "tragically limited". She rejects the idea that our imagination is limited because we are restricted to my own minds. It may indeed be the case that the mind's resources are inadequate to let us experience what it is for someone to be that someone. According to Costello, however, we are not restricted to the resources of our own minds. Whereas Nagel assumes that "our own experience provides the basic material for our imagination, whose range is therefore limited", Costello states that "there is no limit to the extent to which we can think ourselves into the being of another. There are no bounds to the sympathetic imagination" (Coetzee 41, 439, 48-49).

How does Costello substantiate her view? She disagrees with the idea that 'thinking' is a sufficient or even necessary tool for getting inside someone else. The sympathetic imagination does not start in one's mind and has nothing to do with matching mental states. Conversely, Costello frequently presents 'embodiedness' as the starting point for shipping oneself into another being's existence. In this example, she opposes Descartes by saying:

> To thinking, cogitation, I oppose fullness, embodiedness, the sensation of being – not a consciousness of yourself as a kind of ghostly reasoning machine thinking thoughts, but on the contrary the sensation – a heavily affective sensation – of being a body with limbs that have extension in space, of being alive in the world. (46)

"Fullness", a "sensation of being", is the phenomenological interpretation of embodiedness. It comes with the idea of connectedness; that we share the feeling of the space around us with other creatures. This shared feeling, however, is not the reason that Costello points out that there are "no bounds to the sympathetic imagination". Here it becomes evident that refuting Cartesian dualism

24 In his dialogue *The Republic*, Plato writes: "There is from of old a quarrel between philosophy and poetry" (book X, 607 b-c).

necessarily entails seeing the body differently. Contrary to Nagel's assumptions, Costello suggests that there is no abyss, line, or boundary that we cannot cross. This attitude, it would seem, results from adopting a phenomenological worldview. In order to experience the living being of another anymal than ourselves, Costello does not ask us to focus on the limits of our imagination and see whether we can feel the cage of our own mind. Instead, she "urges [us] to read the poets who return the living, electric being into language; and if the poets do not move you, I urge you to walk, flank to flank, beside the beast" (Coetzee 49, 114).

Costello's recommendation that one should read poetry in order to be able to put oneself in the hooves, claws, or paws of an anymal has everything to do with the bodily experience that poetry brings about. Taking Ted Hughes' poem "The Jaguar" as an example, she claims that

> [b]y bodying forth the jaguar, Hughes shows us that we too can embody animals – by the process called poetic invention that mingles breath and sense in a way that no one has explained and no one ever will. He shows us how to bring the living body into being within ourselves. When we read the jaguar poem, when we recollect it afterwards in tranquillity, we are for a brief while the jaguar. He ripples within us, he takes over our body, he is us. (Coetzee 89)

When we read this, we might easily miss how, in one sentence, Costello equates embodying a poetic figure of a jaguar with embodying anymals in real life. She says that Hughes shows us that we can embody *anymals*, not just poetic anymals. In the passage from Aaltola's *Varieties of Empathy* that I quoted above, "becoming them" is still put between inverted commas. Through reading "The Jaguar", however, we simply read that he is us – without hesitation. "Walking flank to flank" with an anymal, Costello suggests, can evoke the same experience as reading a poem that engages with an anymal. Whereas Nagel distrusts our imagination and strives for a method that turns away from it to what he calls an objective phenomenology, Costello assumes that the practices of walking with a jaguar and imagining a jaguar whilst reading Hughes' poem are equally able to teach us what it is like to be a jaguar.

This view on the power of literature is accepted when humans are the protagonists in a narrative (Nussbaum *Love's Knowledge*). When reading *Anna Karenina*, we might be inclined to say that we can feel the eponymous character's distress, inner conflict, and loneliness. Even more so, when we read a novel about an Irish miner who stands up against injustice in the 1980s, it is not at all strange to say that, after having read the novel, we partly know what it was

like to be a miner in Ireland at that time. We claim that we are able to empathise with a purely fictional character and do not hesitate to think that we, through a narrative work, can successfully empathise with a real person, such as a miner.

Costello claims that poetry (specifically, poetry that offers accounts of an engagement with the anymal) can do the same for anymals. Zoopoetry, she suggests, engages us with the lives of anymals as much as a real-life encounter with an anymal would. We might therefore think that Costello gives us a definition of empathy with anymals, but the word 'empathy' does not occur in *Lives*. This may be a deliberate way of avoiding sceptical questions about matching and inter-species boundaries. "Sympathetic imagination", one of the wordings that Costello does use, perhaps comes closest to our standard definition of empathy, with its matching emotions and separate selves. Still, there are important differences.

Before I go into these differences, let me first list the descriptors that Costello uses instead of empathy. In her first lecture, "The Philosophers and the Animals", Costello makes use of the following alternatives:

Knowing what it is like (43)
Thinking our way into the life (44)
Think oneself into the place (47)
Sympathy that allows us to share at times the beings of another (48)
Think ourselves into the being of another (49)
Sympathetic imagination (49)
Think my way into the existence (49)

In her second lecture, "The Poets and the Animals", she refers to these:

Feeling his way toward (85)
Imagine our way into that way of moving (85)
Inhabit that body (86)
Embody (animals) (89)
Bodying forth the animal (89)
Bring the living bodies into being with oneself (89)

What emerges from this list are the various ways in which Costello gives words to the phenomenon of 'feeling with'. The "Philosophers and the Animals" emphasises thinking, which appears in four of the seven descriptions. The list of concepts drawn from this second lecture indicates a shift towards embodiment. As I mentioned above, Costello invokes two ways of knowing what it is like to be a certain anymal. The first is to read the poets; the second is to "walk

flank to flank". Both of these approaches are a far cry from Nagel's exertions. In addition, they both include the body – not as an entity that encloses the subjective experience, but as a living being with whom we can engage. Costello urges us to let go of the idea that "knowing what it is like to be someone else" has anything to do with being alike or sharing common or matching thoughts or feelings. Hughes' poem succeeds in bodying forth the jaguar, Costello proposes, because he does not write *about* a jaguar, but offers a "record of an engagement with him". This engagement must be taken as a lived bodily engagement. Costello states that "poetic invention ... mingles breath and sense in a way that no one has explained and no one ever will" (Coetzee 86, 89). Although this is a bit of a categorical remark about the mystery of poetry, I will nevertheless try to come closer to an explanation of how poetry presents anymals. I take Costello's own emphasis on the role of the body in "Poets and the Animals" as a starting point.

Despite the fact that Costello does not use the word empathy, if we juxtapose "knowing what it is like" and embodying an anymal, we inadvertently enter the empathy debate. In recent discussions of empathy, most researchers begin with a distinction between sympathy and empathy.[25] Sympathy is usually understood as 'feeling for' whereas empathy is understood as 'feeling with'. The distinction is important, because to be truly able to feel what someone else is feeling requires a match – to some extent and in some way – between those feelings, whereas sympathy does not require that someone feels the same. Discussions about the possibility of empathy usually centre on questions of whether I (the empathiser) have enough in common with the target to be able to say that our feelings match. I will come back to this in the following chapter.

For Costello, however, being alike (enough) is not required if one is to feel with an anymal: "The question to ask should not be: Do we have something in common – reason, self-consciousness, a soul – with other animals?" This is because Costello holds the view that knowing what it is like to be someone else depends on sympathy or, as Costello puts it: "the heart is the seat of a faculty, *sympathy*, that allows us to share at times the being of another. Sympathy has everything to do with the subject and little to do with the object, the another". In this quotation we can recognise the dictums of phenomenology. Similarity has nothing to do with sharing the lives of others. It is in "opening our hearts", Costello suggests, that we experience somebody else's being. In addition to open hearts, we need the imagination, with its unlimited range. Unlike Nagel, Costello sees no reason that our imagination should be bound by our experi-

25 See for instance Copland and Goldie (2011) and Keen (*Empathy Novel* 4-6).

ential lives. We need poetry, then, because in poetry the boundlessness of the imagination is shown and exercised through bodily engagement: "When we read the jaguar poem, when we recollect it afterwards in tranquillity, we are for a brief while the jaguar. He ripples within us, he takes over our body, he is us" (Coetzee 47, 48, 89).

We may react to Costello's remarks, as Dennett might, by saying that they obscure rather than clarify what poetry has to offer. However, it is worth noting the central motifs of Costello's lectures: opening up of our hearts rather than finding similarities (between species), the need for poetry to guide us into the lives of others, and the abandonment of the Cartesian binary of mind versus body. Dennett suggests that the Cartesian dualism haunts laypeople and scientists alike. *Lives* probes into the possibilities of what it would mean to leave that binary behind. Without the mind- versus-body distinction, what words would we use? How would our worldview change? And would we be able to know what it is like to be a bat?

2

GIVING ANYMALS A VOICE

2.1 Introduction

"Read the poets who return the living, electric being to language" is Elizabeth Costello's advice to those who seek a way to come closer to an anymal's world. "And if the poets do not move you", she expands, "I urge you to walk flank to flank beside the beast" (Coetzee 114). This addition is remarkable, for it juxtaposes the experience of walking next to an anymal in real life with the experience of reading about an anymal in a poem.[26] What is it about poetry that makes it especially well-suited to "body forth" an anymal, as Costello puts it? It is this question that I want to explore in this chapter.

Costello explicitly refers to poetry being able to open us up to engagements with anymals and not, for instance, to novels, the visual arts, or any other art form. And even within the domain of poetry not all poems succeed in bodying forth the anymal, according to Costello. Her example of a poem that succeeds in this regard is Ted Hughes' "Jaguar" because it does not represent a jaguar, but instead invites us to engage with a jaguar (86). Poetry can use anymals as stand-ins for humans or present anymals in a sentimental way. The poems that make it possible to "walk flank to flank" with anymals, however, are those that open

26 It is also remarkable that the injunction to "read the poets" comes first, whereas one would expect real-life experiences to be ranked above literary experiences. Martha Nussbaum, for instance, affirms the priority of 'real' experiences when she advises us to go on safari and if we are unable to do that, we should watch films about anymals ("Wat"). On a side note: her remark about watching films (documentaries?) figuring anymals is out of line with one of her leading ideas: that novels train empathy (see Nussbaum *Love's Knowledge*). Apparently, the apt art form for training empathy differs when the others with whom we are empathising are anymals. In addition to Nussbaum's advice being unsubstantiated, her suggestion is inadequate in that wildlife documentaries often portray (the lifespan of) anymals in a thoroughly anthropomorphised manner. For instance, Alison Sealy and Lee Oakley have argued that in the documentary *Life*, the wildlife researcher David Attenborough depicts anymals in ways that are anthropomorphised at several levels. For a discussion on this topic, see Sealey and Oakley.

up a space for engagement. The activity of "walking flank to flank" implies that we are neither looking at the anymal from an often indifferent standpoint, from which we try to classify it, nor represent anymal symbolically. The iambic rhythm of Hughes' poem mimics the "thrust of the jaguar's heel"; attending to this rhythm, we sense that we walk alongside the anymal. Feeling our flanks' proximity to the anymal's, we forget our classifications and symbols.

Since rhythm mimics motion and is especially characteristic of poetry, researchers writing about anymal poetry have followed up on Costello's remark by suggesting that rhythm, above all else, is the distinctive means by which poetry bodies forth an anymal.[27] In exploring poetry's capacity for 'bodying forth', my aim in this chapter is to present other poetic tools that draw us into engagements as well. Bringing an electric being to life certainly requires a poet's attention to rhythm. Still, an "electric being" is more than a moving body described from a third-person perspective. My question is whether we, through poetry, engage with the anymal's whole electric being, including its mind.[28] I am aware that my suggestion – that there are a fuller range of poetic tools for bringing a mind to life, in addition to that of mimicking bodily motion through rhythm – seems to reinforce the mind-body dualism. My argument, however, is that in poems rhythm, sound, words, word order and images more often than not support each other in a way that is seldom seen in novels. Hence, although my discussion focuses on how thought processes are depicted, this emphasis goes hand in hand with the insight that these thought processes are interwoven with poems' more bodily aspects.

This chapter engages with an eco-linguistic discussion that takes place largely in the study of narratology. A central question in this conversation is that of whether human language and especially human narratives have inalienable anthropomorphic features. Monika Fludernik argues for precisely this idea: "In my model there can therefore be narratives without plot, but there cannot be any narratives without a human (anthropomorphic) experiencer of some sort at some narrative level. Fludernik denies human beings the possibilities of having experiences that go beyond their own bodily constitution or writing narratives without a human-like experiencer. For Fludernik, bodily

27 See for instance Michael Malay; Onno Oerlemans.

28 Here, my interpretation differs from that of Oerlemans, who writes that Costello "valorizes poems that dwell on the physical beings of animals, rather than imagining and portraying their mental life or consciousness" (20). Unlike Oerlemans, I think that Costello leaves room for seeing anymals as psycho-physical wholes. Oerlemans' remark adheres to a dualist paradigm of mind versus body. As I have argued in the former chapter, however, I think that *Lives* is best grasped as a phenomenological attempt to articulate a de-binarised worldview by way of specific terminology and a particular set of tools.

boundaries form "the rock-bottom levels" of understanding (9).[29] Within narratology especially, Fludernik's work has prompted many researchers to argue the opposite case, resulting in Jan Alber's "Unnatural Narratology" research school, among other ventures. In addition, Marco Caracciolo argues for "a resistance to an anthropomorphic understanding of character" ("Notes" 3). In so doing, he takes up Andrew Goatly's account of what he calls "Green Grammar", which develops grammatical tools that make it possible for language to keep pace with new scientific findings ("Green Grammar" 543-558). Central to Goatly's findings is the idea that humans are not the centre of the world. On this view, the use of transitive verbs that take the subject as an agent and an object as a passive entity – in short, the grammar of most Western languages – does not do justice to a nature that turns out to be more process-oriented than this grammar allows for. Given that Goatly's tools "undermine dualism and anthropocentric assumptions", Caracciolo explores their applicability to an econarratological theory of character ("Notes" 179).

Ecolinguists search for ways in which grammar might give up her favouritism for humans as the only agents. Caracciolo mentions *The Echo Maker*, a novel by Richard Powers, in which the flocking of cranes brings one character to ponder the interrelatedness of humans and the birds ("Notes" 181-182). The birds have a central role in the novel's plot. Indeed, the mentally ill protagonist thinks that a bird's brain has been implanted in him. That said, birds' experiential lives remain out of focus. The possibility of narrating a non-anthropomorphic mind, it would seem, is not even considered. There are of course novels that do portray anymals' experiential worlds. In some, anymals are even the protagonists – think, for instance, of *Watership Down* by Richard Adams (1974) and *Flush* (1933) by Virginia Woolf. However, the rabbits in *Watership Down* and the cocker spaniel Flush in the eponymous novel are too anthropomorphised to give us insights into their minds' species-specific characteristics.

Now, returning to Fludernik, the question is if she is right in claiming that narratives are necessarily humanoid. Is it true that giving anymals a voice means anthropomorphising them? If bodily boundaries are the "rock-bottom levels" of understanding, then writing a narrative with an anymal as the protagonist becomes a suspect, maybe even impossible undertaking. Any attempt to open up an anymal world must face up to problems concerning the translatability of experiences and beliefs. It is in giving words to what anymals think or ascribing content to anymals' beliefs that "we run into worries about inappropriate anthropomorphism", Kristin Andrews writes (*Animal Mind* 109). Novels

29 See also Steven Pinker: "The body is the ultimate barrier to empathy. Your toothache does not hurt me the same way as it hurts you" (qtd. in McFee); for a discussion of this statement, see McFee.

in which anymals are endowed with a voice grapple with exactly this problem. Yet in poetry the issue of "inappropriate anthropomorphism" seems less pressing. My claim is that certain poetic tools, which I will call zoopoetical tools, give poetry an advantage over novels when it comes to presenting anymals' voices and subjective experiences.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. Firstly, I explain why Andrews thinks that the practice of ascribing content to anymals' beliefs is especially prone to anthropomorphism. Secondly, I discuss the extent to which one solution to this problem (put forward by David Armstrong) might also contribute towards diminishing anthropomorphism in novels and poems. In investigating this idea, I contrast paragraphs taken from Adams' *Watership Down* with Woolf's *Flush* and *The Dog* by Kerstin Ekman (2010). Thirdly, I examine whether the tools discerned by Andrew Goatly ("Green Grammar") and Marco Caracciolo ("Notes"), supplemented by specific zoopoetical tools, allow for more truthful depictions of not only anymals' observable behaviour, but even their minds. The task of giving anymals a voice can be seen as the final frontier in fiction or poetry. I conclude that in the tools they use, poets do not sidestep the problem of finding words for what anymals think. Far from it: they present a new way of looking at thought in which thought processes are seen as embodied. My claim is that these poetic tools, in addition to rhythm, allow poets to return the whole of anymals' living, electric being to language.

2.2 Giving words to beliefs: *de dicto* versus *de re* and the relation to anthropomorphism

Why is it that the practice of giving anymals a voice – or, in other words, ascribing content to anymals' beliefs – is particularly susceptible to anthropomorphism? Let me begin answering this question by way of a detour through an example in which content is ascribed to a human belief.

Suppose that we read the following sentence in a novel: "I have had enough of this conversation, she thought exhaustedly. She believed that the pompous man was indifferent to her and what she had to say. He did not react to what she had said in any way and leaned backwards, apparently distracted by his phone". In reading this, we are perhaps unaware that the novelist has some implicit assumptions about thinking, perspective and how a reader 'enters' a fictional mind. To begin with an assumption to do with the latter issue: it seems to go without saying that a fictional character's thoughts are best conveyed in propositions – "I am having enough of this conversation", "the pompous man is indifferent to me". This is a generally accepted idea about how we think as humans.[30] Secondly, in this example the fictional character performs a short interior monologue and there is no doubt that this thought belongs to her and somehow occurs within her mind, hidden from the man. We know this, because the man gives us no indication that he knows what she is thinking; he does not *see* her thoughts. Even the exhaustion, which we cannot but imagine by way

30 In novels, metaphors can serve as a way of avoiding convoluted thinking, as I discuss in chapter 4. What is impossible in novels is possible in comics, in which pictures of anymals are sometimes accompanied by thought bubbles depicting what they think. This sidesteps the problem of putting words in their mouths. See for instance *Asterix en Cleopatra*, in which Idéfix is shown thinking about a bone that he was promised by way of a picture of the bone, even though the picture of the bone is of course still drawn from a human perspective (Goscinny and Uderzo 265). Indeed, some graphic novels present thinking without using any words at all (see, for instance, Jason 2006, Ott 2005, Tan 2006).

of its physical manifestations, is presented as belonging to a thought process. Hence, the qualifications of *how* the character experiences the man doubtlessly belong to her, are formed within her mind, and are invisible – except for the reader, who has privileged access to her head.

Aside from being rather cliché, my fabricated sentences, lifted from a non-existent novel, do not strike us as an odd example of how thought should be presented. This indicates not only that this is a perfectly common way to present thinking characters in novels, but also how we think about thinking in real life. We have a mind of our own, where thinking in propositions takes place. Given that our mind belongs to us, we can easily hide it and we have special access to it. However, when reading a comparable sentence from, say, a rabbit in *Watership Down*, we hesitate. On reading that rabbits are hopping around and sniffing leaves and grass, no anthropomorphism alarm bell goes off. It is when words are given to what a rabbit is thinking that our worries about "inappropriate anthropomorphism" begin. But why? Why would describing thought be more susceptible to anthropomorphism than describing motion?

As I have suggested above, ascribing content to anymals' beliefs is another way of saying what anymals think. Andrews points out that most anymal cognitivists and psychologists assume that anymals have beliefs about the world. Beliefs are inferred from behaviour. A belief becomes especially visible when there is a discrepancy between the world and how someone behaves. If I am scared because I believe that I am being chased, for instance, this belief will incite me to break into a run. If I think (wrongly or rightly) that my belief is false, then I will stop running. In this example, the world may not have changed, but my belief has altered and thus my behaviour too. It would appear that there is a layer of beliefs between the world and myself. It is through false beliefs, such as that which got me running, that we learn that people somehow represent the world for themselves and that these representations, or beliefs, set us in motion without necessarily influencing the world itself.

Now, the content of my belief need not be described in detail, but it must be something along the lines of: "I am being chased". It is easy for humans amongst one another to know what someone believes, because we can ask each other and often receive verbal answers. When it comes to anymals we infer belief from behaviour in much the same way. Although the word 'thinks' seems more obvious than 'believes' in connection with the following examples, it would be safe to suppose that when a dog paws the leash and stands before the front door wagging her tail "she believes that we're going outside" or when a cat runs after me when she hears the cupboard door open that "he believes

that he is about to get food".[31] It is only when we try to judge exactly *what* the dog believes – in other words, how she represents the world – we end up with anthropomorphism. In developing their position regarding anthropomorphism, Andrews and Radenovic refer to an example given by David Armstrong:

> Armstrong asks us to consider Fido the dog, who just observed his master burying a meaty bone in the backyard. The problem, as seen by Armstrong, is that we cannot conclude that "Fido believes there is a meaty bone buried in the yard" because Fido does not have the concept of meaty or bone or yard. In order to have the concept *bone*, it seems, one also needs to have the concepts *skeleton*, *joint* and so forth. In order for Fido to have the concept *bone*, he would need to know, for example, something about the relation between the skeleton and the muscles of a vertebrate, and their function in animal locomotion. To have the concept *bone*, one needs to know things about bones, and this requires more concepts. (19)[32]

From this quotation we can learn what is entailed by Andrews' remark about the inappropriate anthropomorphism of ascribing content to beliefs. Our concepts – such as 'yard' and 'bone' – are not meaningful on their own: they refer to a whole web of concepts that humans share. Humans divide the world into squirrels, trees, backyards, and meaty bones but these divisions are made against the background of a human web of concepts. How, then, would we be able to infer the divisions that Fido uses from his behaviour?[33] We might only come to know these divisions if we were able to translate the whole of Fido's conceptual web. For our meaty bone can only be called a 'meaty bone' because we know the referential context in which the words 'meaty' and 'bone' belong. It seems that any description of the content of Fido's belief is doomed

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31 Although a sceptic might respond to these ascriptions by arguing that it does not follow from the fact that the dog grabbed the leash that he *believes* that he is going outside. Like a well-trained Pavlov-dog, it may be a merely automatic reaction to you putting on your shoes. No representations of the world are needed.

32 Andrews and Radenovic cite Armstrong's *Belief, Truth and Logic* (1973), which indeed uses the example of a dog's behaviour to point out that it is possible to ascribe beliefs to the dog. However, it is Peter Stich (to whom Andrews also refers) who reacts to this example and names the dog 'Fido' in an article named "Do Animals Have Beliefs?" of 1979, not Armstrong himself as Andrews assumes.

33 The issue of the indeterminacy of translation is hardly confined to connections among species. Willard von Orman Quine has demonstrated this with his thought experiment named 'Gavagai', in which a linguist visiting a community shut off from the rest of the world notes that every time they see a rabbit, they say the word 'gavagai'. Even though it may seem obvious that one should translate 'gavagai' as 'rabbit', Quine states that many translations are possible: "there go undetached rabbit-parts" or "there is rabbitness there" are just two potential renditions. According to Quine, the conclusion must be that indeterminacy besets translations made on the basis of the use of a word (121-148).

to get bogged down in questions about translatability of his web of concepts to human language.

Andrews writes that in order to preserve the possibility of ascribing beliefs to anymals, Armstrong suggests that we can

> attribute beliefs to animals by removing the perspectival aspect of the attribution and indicating the actual state of affairs that the animals' beliefs are about. So, instead of saying something like "Fido believes that there is a meaty bone in the back yard"... we could correctly say that Fido believes that this thing (pointing at the bone) is there (pointing at the spot in the yard). That is, Armstrong suggests that we move from attributing an opaque *de dicto* statement to Fido – one that captures how Fido thinks about the meaty bone – to a transparent *de re* statement one that refers to the objects, properties, and situations in the world. (*Animal Mind* 86)

The difference between the two kinds of statement to which Andrews refers here – *transparent* or *de re* (about the thing) on the one hand and *opaque* or *de dicto* (about what is said) on the other – has a long history and is important when we talk about what someone believes (or another attitudinal verb). Andrews explains the difference between these sorts of statement by way of the example of Lois Lane, who believes that Superman is stronger than Clark Kent. On a *de re* level, this belief would be impossible, since Clark Kent and Superman are one and the same individual. When we take into account the fact that Lane does not know that Clark Kent and Superman are the same person, however, then on a *de dicto* level Lane's belief in Superman's superior strength is perfectly possible. A *de dicto* description of belief says something about how Lane views the world (her perspective), whereas a *de re* belief is comparable to pointing at the world.

Another way to explain the difference is to test whether it is possible to replace a term with a co-designating term without violating its truth value. To test this idea against the example of my made-up passage from a non-existent novel: suppose that the pompous man is actually the woman's father, but she does not know this. The narrator cannot say that she thinks her father to be indifferent, because that is not what she thinks; she does not know the man to be her father. Given the impossibility of replacing "the pompous man" for "her father", it would seem that her belief is *de dicto* – that it tells us something about her view, in this case of the man. It is, however, possible for the narrator to use the preposition 'of' in the sentence to create a space between the subject (the woman) and the object (the pompous man/her father). Andrews writes in this respect about Fido's belief: "While Fido doesn't believe *that* the meaty bone is buried in the yard, he does believe *of* the meaty bone and *of* the yard that the

former is buried in the latter" (*Animal Mind* 86). Considering the sentence from the novel, we then may read from an omniscient narrator's point of view: "she thinks of her father that he is indifferent, but she does not know him to be her father". This sentence is possible, because the woman's perspective is left out through the use of 'of', allowing for her ignorance about the identity of the man.

Why does this distinction tell us something about anthropomorphism? Saying exactly what Fido thinks on a *de dicto* level (that takes his perspective into account) is prone to anthropomorphism because we might fill in Fido's beliefs with our own language and corresponding concepts. In articulating his perspective (in this case on the bone), we would have to render it in words. This gives rise to issues of untranslatability, because it entails reckoning with the conceptual web in which Fido's beliefs are embedded, of which we may have little or no knowledge. Removing this perspectival aspect of Fido's beliefs by way of a *de re* ascription results in statements such as this: Fido believes *of* the meaty bone that it is in the yard. Again, the benefit of this ascription is that we do not describe the content of Fido's beliefs; we only describe the part of the world toward which the belief is directed. Accordingly, Andrews writes that a *de re* ascription of belief is 'perspectiveless': pointing towards the world does not require a language that is bound to a perspective, whether that be a dog's, as in this instance, or for that matter our own perspective (hence the pointing). *De re* ascriptions of belief can be recognised through a replacement test. If I, in context of this particular sentence about Fido's belief, replace 'meaty bone' with a co-designating term – say 'fleshy rib bone' – then that statement remains perfectly plausible. This is because a *de re* ascription makes no claims as to *how* Fido thinks about the bone or the concepts that he uses in thinking about the bone. Thus, a *de re* description of belief tries to seize language capacity to point to things by describing that at which someone's belief is aimed, not how that someone relates to their belief.

Describing thoughts *de dicto* is likely to lead to the projection of anthropomorphic content onto anymals' beliefs. If a *de re* ascription of belief presents a solution to this, might it not also benefit novelists and poets depicting thinking anymals?

2.3 Presenting beliefs in novels

The claim that poetry is ahead of prose in avoiding anthropomorphism is not new.

In a footnote to her 1936 article "Man and Animals in Recent Poetry", Elizabeth Atkins had already written that contemporaneous poetry had already outmoded anthropomorphised dogs such as that of Woolf's *Flush*, which I discuss in this section (265). In contrast to *Flush*, poetry of the time describes anymals as creatures with intrinsic value without drawing them into a human world. It is perhaps more accurate to think of differences in genre and therefore differences in affordances than of some sort of race between novels and poetry. However, for the sake of the argument, let me assume that there is such a thing as progress in literature and that poetry was then and may still be 'ahead' of prose. This poses the question of whether prose can ever catch up. If a narrative structure is inherently anthropomorphic – so much follows from Fludernik's account of narrative – then characters and their thoughts, as inalienable components of novels, are anthropomorphic too. What is more, this suggests that when it comes to anthropomorphism poetry is by definition ahead of prose.

In the following paragraph I discuss three passages from novels featuring thinking anymals: *Flush* by Virginia Woolf, *Watership Down* by Richard Adams, and *The Dog* by Kerstin Ekman. The trend that I want to bring into focus begins with the overt anthropomorphism of *Flush*, modulates into a lesser anthropomorphism in *Watership Down*, and culminates in the minimal anthropomorphism in *The Dog*.[34] In view of the *de re*/*de dicto* distinction, my hypothesis is that this movement is less a matter of ascribing fewer and fewer human faculties or predicates to anymals than of how these anymals' beliefs are presented.

For an example of the highest level of anthropomorphism, let us attend to the following paragraph from *Flush*:

> Dogs therefore, Flush began to suspect, differ; some are high, others low; and his suspicions were confirmed by snatches of talk held in passing with the dogs of Wimpole Street. "See that scallywag? A mere mongrel! ... By gad, that's a fine Spaniel. One of the best blood in Britain! ... Pity his ears aren't a shade more curly. ... There's a topknot for you!"
>
> From such phrases, from the accent of praise or derision in which they were spoken, at the pillar-box or outside the public-house where the footmen were exchanging racing tips, Flush knew before the summer had passed that there is no equality among dogs: there are high dogs and low dogs. (Woolf 32-33)

We all immediately recognise that dividing dog breeds into a class society constitutes an overt anthropomorphising of a dog's world or else it is an example of "a dog-consciousness so incredibly human", as Atkins puts it (265). We have not seen behaviour in dogs from which we can learn specifically that mongrels are looked down upon whereas full-blooded spaniels are held in high esteem. Sure, dogs living in groups do know a hierarchy, but that hierarchy is certainly not based upon on a dog's belief that there is such a thing as "the best blood in Britain".

That said, removing references to class society and other hints of human frames of reference is not necessarily enough to abate completely worries about inappropriate anthropomorphism. This becomes clear in the following excerpt from the novel *Watership Down*, in which the protagonists Hazel and Fiver search out a safe place for the small group of rabbits that they lead. Although the preamble to the book assures the reader that Richard Adams' novel is about 'real rabbits', we instantly come to know that 'real' means that which is opposed to fables. For even though the rabbits speak 'Lapine', a rabbit language, and worry rabbit worries, the presentation of their thoughts betrays the anthropomorphism of *de dicto* ascriptions of belief:

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34 These examples make clear that J. A. Fischer's distinctions among different kinds of anthropomorphism fall short of fulfilling my purpose in this chapter. Fischer distinguished interpretative anthropomorphism from imaginative anthropomorphism. Whereas the first category includes all instances of beliefs or intentions being ascribed to anymals, the latter consists of all fictional or imaginary characters (Gods or anymals) that are presented as resembling humans. The latter category is truncated on my view. What I am looking for are non-anthropomorphised anymals in poems (and in this chapter novels too). It seems that Fischer assumes that imaginative anthropomorphism can never encompass a quest to portray anymals as themselves.

> "Look!" said Fiver suddenly. "That's the place for us, Hazel. High, lonely hills, where the wind and the sound carry and the ground's as dry as straw in a barn. That's where we ought to be. That's where we have to go."
>
> Hazel looked at the dim, far-off hills. Obviously, the idea of trying to reach them was out of the question. It might well prove to be all they could do to find their way across the heather to some quiet field or copse bank like those they had been used to. It was lucky that Fiver had not come out with this foolish notion in front of any of the others, especially as there was trouble enough already. If only he could be persuaded to drop it here and now, there would be no harm done – unless, indeed, he already said anything to Pipkin.
>
> "I don't think we could get the others to go as far as that, Fiver," he said. "They're frightened and tired as it is, you know. What we need is to find a safe place soon, and I'd rather succeed in doing what we can than to fail to do what we can't" (Adams 63).

There is no such thing as class society in this excerpt. Moreover, the rabbits do not engage in obviously human affairs, whereas in *Flush* dogs gossip about mongrels of poor breeding. It is more 'rabbitish' to search for a safe place than it is 'doggish' to discuss class differences. The rabbits of *Watership Down* may be more leporine than *Flush*'s dogs are canine, but it is easy to overlook how the verbal translation of the detail of what Hazel thinks sets off an anthropomorphism alarm. This is even the case when it comes to simple remarks such as "we need to find a safe place soon".

Weaving the distinction between *de re* and *de dicto* ascriptions of belief into this discussion, we can see that Hazel's and Fiver's beliefs are presented *de dicto*; they describe the world from Hazel's and Fiver's perspective. We can see this, for example, in how the hills are described. Whereas to Fiver they are "high, lonely hills", to Hazel they are "dim, far-off hills". It would make no sense to replace the "high, lonely hills" in which Fiver's believes with Hazel's "dim, far-off hills". The descriptions of their thoughts about the hills are therefore *de dicto*: they present the reader with their respective perspectives on the hills. Hazel is brave, thoughtful, rational, and empathic. Fiver has prophetic dreams and does not care about how those dreams might be communicated to keep the group of rabbits together. We come to learn about their specific characters precisely through the formulation of their beliefs. Hazel and Fiver see the same hills, but evaluate them differently, allowing us to get acquainted with their different qualities in the process.

Now, taking away the perspectival aspect of a *de dicto* ascription of belief, therefore, would not be enough to render character: it would take away a

character's point of view and nullify their typical character traits as a result. Distinctive characters, however, are indispensable in a narrative. This leads to a conundrum: if *de dicto* descriptions of belief are undeniably anthropomorphic (because they put anymal perspectives into words) and *de re* ascriptions of belief cannot flesh out character, how can a narrative ever body forth an anymal as anymal?[35] The search, then, is for a description of belief that is both *de re* and captures a unique perspective. The question is whether this type of belief can ever figure in a narrative, since traditionally novels are defined in terms of their characters' believability.

It is exactly this problem that Kerstin Ekman addresses, albeit implicitly, in her novella *The Dog* (1986). Ekman begins and ends her novella by questioning its narrative structure. "When does something begin?" she asks on the first page and at the end of the tale she echoes her first question with: "When does something end?" Ekman answers the first question resolutely: "It doesn't begin". As human readers, we expect a narrative to have a beginning, middle, and an end. When it comes to a dog's tale, though, the question of when something begins may be less informative than the question that Ekman poses a paragraph later: "Where does a tale begin?" (2). The 'where' is more important, in this case, because the tale is about a peculiar puppy. Instead of lying against his mother's belly, as a puppy normally would, he rests at the foot of a spruce – which has to be explained. We read a novella in a human language, but these questions about beginnings and endings prompt us to reflect on how we normally shape our stories. It also gives Ekman more freedom with regard to how to render this dog's life. As a way of moving to and fro between the anymal and the reader, Ekman first describes the dog to us *ex negativo*:

> The only warmth he got was from his own body. Inside him was emptiness. He couldn't think: warmth, belly, teats, milk. He didn't remember his mother's belly with its thin, white coat, or her yellow eyes gleaming when they all suckled. (2)

The sentence "He couldn't think: warmth, belly, teats, milk" tells us a lot about the dog. We learn that he is a puppy, still in his neonatal period, but that he has now been separated from his mother for too long to clearly remember her warmth and milk. The string of nouns following "He couldn't think" evoke in

35 In taking this up in future study, the question would be whether this is indeed an impasse for novels depicting anymals. It seems that such works are either written from a third-person perspective, in which case the conducted dialogue takes place between humans (as in *White Fang* or *Moby Dick* for instance), or the anymals are given a voice but are consequently anthropomorphised (as in *Black Beauty* or *Watership Down* for instance).

the reader an image of a canine mother with swollen teats and puppies drinking in her warmth. The puppy cannot think about what he lacks, but he still has wants, although they are muted by hunger and cold. Ekman uses this technique of description *ex negativo* to level the fixed separation between inside and outside. She describes the dog's whereabouts as he tries to stay alive from a third-person perspective. At some point in the novella's beginning (if it is a beginning), however, we read what the dog thinks from his point of view. Our anthropomorphism alarm does not go off:

> Slushy waters and sour lingonberries. Feathers in the moss, straggly, odourless. Nothing but water in his aching stomach, wet paws in the marsh. Push on, push on, slow and soggy. Chew on feathers, suck on bones. Water dripping on nose, stinging eyes and aching belly. Traipse and trudge. Crouch with belly to the snow. Push on with nose to the ground.
>
> Odourless water. Meltwater. Hungerwater.
>
> The moon creeps up on the forest. The night is not silent. It purls and ripples, it twitters and rustles. Up, keep going across the patchy ground. Body uneasy. Patches of moonlight and snow, patches of shadow and dark marshland.
>
> Sharp branches, paws and claws. Crouching stumps with furry backs and ears. Sleeping boulders. Fall asleep on damp lichen, frozen stiff and dizzy. Spots before the eyes. Hunger pangs and dull fear. Sleep it off. Sleep in the sun. Suck the warm teats. Doze off. Suck. Suck the warmth. (30, 32)

The paragraph ends here along with the dog falling asleep. The opening of the next paragraph is again written in the third person. How does Ekman bring her readers to trust this description from the dog's perspective? What would be the right interpretation of a sentence like: "Up, keep going across the patchy ground"? It could be read as if the dog is encouraging himself, a description of what he is doing, or both at once. The effect of the simultaneity of these two readings is that whether we read the line as a thought of the dog encouraging himself or as a description of what he is doing, the other reading is not erased in our imagination. As a result, we treat the dog's behaviour and thoughts as one.

The neologism 'hungerwater' produces a similar effect. The word describes how the dog thinks about the water that he comes across. Is this a description of a thought *de dicto* or *de re*? We might say that it is necessarily *de dicto* because it is the dog's perspective on the water: it is hungerwater *to him*. We could equally argue, however, that it is a *de re* description of his thought about the water, since the term "hungerwater" can be replaced for "meltwater" or "odourless water".

Thus the term "hungerwater" passes the test for a *de re* description of a belief, namely that the term could be replaced with a co-designating term, *salva veritate*. Although this may be right, it remains difficult to decide whether the dog's thoughts are indeed thoughts and, if so, whether they are *de dicto* or *de re*. Looking at the paragraph again, we can see the cause of this confusion. Thoughts normally belong to a subject. Here, however, the subject is purposefully left absent.

On the one hand, Ekman's decision to drop the pronoun might lead one to think that these lines are not to be read as thoughts at all, since they do not accord with conventional syntax and are therefore neither *de dicto* nor *de re*. On the other hand, though, we might stay with Ekman's depiction of the dog and learn from how he presents his thought. A key insight may be that thoughts and movements belong together, especially in a dog's world. Achieving this effect in a novel is an exceptional accomplishment. The tools that Ekman uses are crucial in creating this effect: descriptions *ex negativo*, pronoun dropping, and neologism. I call these tools, along with the others I add in the following chapters, zoopoetical tools. They are based upon Andrew Goatly's conception of what he calls "Green Grammar", which is the subject of the next section. After unpacking the idea of green grammar and introducing the ways in which zoopoetical tools are used in zoopoetry, I explain in more depth how Ekman succeeds in giving a *de re* description of a dog's thought whilst preserving his perspective.

2.4 "Green Grammar" and its effects on the presentation of thought

Eco-linguists such as Andrew Goatly have argued for a less anthropocentric grammar. Goatly points out that the grammar that we use in both ordinary life and scientific language does not keep pace with scientific findings, such as an "active process of matter, or the inseparability of life and its environment (537). Goatly writes:

> Equally important is for us to realize that what conceptual features are criterial, the distinction between literalness and metaphoricity, is solely dependent on social convention. The congruent wordings which represent first-order entities/things as nouns and second-order entities/processes as verbs are no more natural or consonant with some kind of external reality than, say, the representation of things with verbs would be or, in the case of nominalization of verbs, representing processes with nouns. Of course, our conventional use of nouns to refer to the former and verbs to the latter reinforces this permanence-based categorization, for wordings after all 'confer' a reality, simultaneously constructing and referring to our world. (541)

Our language does not only reflect the world as it is; as Goatly argues, it also shapes the world. He gives the example of how we could use nouns to refer to processes, which might result in a different worldview because nouns can be subjects in our worldview. Goatly seeks to adapt grammar to new scientific findings, to establish grammatical structures that favour processes over things and leave the subject versus object binary behind by abandoning the transitive clause. A transitive clause requires a definite, active subject that does something to a passive object. Getting rid of the transitive clause in favour of a more ergative grammar opens up the possibility of revealing nature's more proces-

sual character.[36] Along similar lines and following Goatly, Marco Caracciolo searches for ways of opening grammar up so as to include nonhuman others more fully. In addition to abandoning the transitive clause in favour of an ergative system, Caracciolo mentions the use of words such as "it" and "there" (thus shifting attention from subjects to processes), the use of reciprocal verbs, the promotion of places or environments to the position of grammatical subjects, and lastly nominalisation (changing a verb into a noun) ("Notes" 179). None of these tools are widely used in everyday, scientific, or narrative language. As I have mentioned above, Caracciolo gives an example of cranes playing a role in the plot of a novel. Attending to a specific paragraph, he shows that the depiction of the cranes benefits from the tools suggested by Goatly.

What Ekman shows in the passage from *The Dog* quoted above, however, goes much further than describing anymal behaviour or granting anymals a role in the plot. The dropping of the pronoun in the paragraph from *The Dog* accords with the ergative system. Verbs become central to the sentences, which is consistent with Goatly's idea of a green grammar focusing on processes rather than things. Goatly's critique of standard grammar is that it privileges agents. According to Goatly, the ergative system, in which objects play a more active role in processes, aligns more closely with the way in which everything is interconnected in nature. Ekman goes even further than displacing agents from their central position, though. There is no subject in her paragraph and thus no character who needs to be reformulated according to green grammar. Nevertheless, we experience the world more or less through the dog's perspective. The neologism 'hungerwater' plays an important role in this. Although novels rarely use neologisms or drop pronouns, these techniques are common in poems. Perhaps put more precisely: when these tools are present, the paragraph becomes more poetic. In fact, if we read the paragraph again, we can see that it could be a categorised as a poem. Note that this is the only place in the novella where Ekman describes the world from the dog's point of view and that it is exactly here that Ekman uses zoopoetical tools. The outcome could be called a poem. This is no coincidence.

36 In the ergative system, the grammatical object participates in the action initiated by the subject. Also, the noun in a single-verb sentence is marked as an object (see Goatly). So, in the phrase 'I run', 'I' is marked as a subject, whereas in a hypothetical English ergative sentence, the phrase would be 'me run', presenting the verb as something that happens to me.

2.5 Thinking anymals in poems: Introducing zoopoetical tools

Whereas Caracciolo advises novelists to green up their grammar to make room for non-human anymals, it might be safe to say that poetry has more to offer in this respect. Anymals not only figure in many poems, but even have a voice. The impasse that novelists face in attempting to present thinking anymals is as follows. They can choose either to present their thoughts *de re* (which diminishes anthropomorphism, but leaves out their specific perspective – an undesirable consequence in a novel) or to present their thoughts *de dicto* (which ends up in anthropomorphism, since we do not translate one discrete meaning but a whole web of beliefs into human language).

Poems, in contrast, seem able to break this deadlock through the abundant use of zoopoetical tools, such as neologisms, pronoun dropping, and rhythm. When poets give anymals a voice, they do so in much the same way as Ekman in *The Dog*. Consider for instance the poem "Pigs" by Les Murray:

> Us all sore cement was we.
> Not warmed then with glares. Not glutting mush
> under that pole the lightning's tied to.
> No farrow-shit in milk to make us randy.
> Us back in cool god-shit. We ate crisp.
> We nosed up good rank in the tunnelled bush.
> Us all fuckers then. And Big, huh? Tusked
> the balls-biting dog and gutsed him wet.
> Us shoved down the soft cement of rivers.
> Us snored the earth hollow, filled farrow, grunted.
> Never stopped growing. We sloughed, we soughed
> and balked no weird till the high ridgebacks was us
> with weight-buried hooves. Or bristly, with milk.

> Us never knowed like slitting nor hose-biff then.
> Nor the terrible sheet-cutting screams up ahead.
> The burnt water kicking. This gone-already feeling
> here in no place with our heads on upside down.
> (36, ll. 1-17)

The first line could be rephrased as "we were all on sore cement". Given that the rhythm here mimics the short snorts made by pigs, however, Murray has been lenient with the grammar: in this way pigs – who probably have a more articulate feeling of 'we' – are accorded more space than received grammar would allow for. To be more precise, the pig's voice (or pigs' voices) rarely uses (or use) the subject pronoun 'we', favouring the object pronoun 'us' instead. Normally, we would use 'us' when something is done to us. Here, the pigs/pig use(s) 'us' in the place of a subject pronoun. This aptly shows how their actions, while still being actions, are preordained by the environment they inhabit and the horrendous fate that lies ahead, described in the final lines. Dropping the subject pronoun foregrounds the fact that these pigs are treated as objects. Furthermore, neologisms help depict a pig mind. For instance, "farrow-shit" may be not a full-fledged neologism such as hungerwater, but it serves to open up a pig world, since they will experience the dung of their farrows differently. Accordingly, it deserves a unique word. The penultimate line "The burnt water kicking. This gone-already feeling" horrifically portrays what lies ahead for the pigs. Here as well, pronouns are dropped and a neologistic compound ("gone-already feeling") captures the sense in which the pigs know what is about to happen. We can see how rhythm, neologism, contravention of grammatical rules, and a switch from subject to object pronouns all work together in the poem to translate a pig's mind. We might still hesitate and ask whether this is an apt translation of how a pig experiences the world. However, to hesitate in this way is not the same doubt concerning the extent to which the poem is anthropomorphic.

Do poets merely sidestep the impasse represented by the choice between the *de dicto* versus a *de re* modes of presenting thought? Or do they show us a way out? How we answer these questions depends on whether poets have what we are looking for: a *de re* description of thought that preserves the anymal's point of view, the poetic technique that I outlined above. Not much has been written on the *de re*/*de dicto* distinction in relation to poetry. Still, it would seem that the obvious way to evaluate thoughts in poems would be to argue that thought in poems are *de dicto*. Surely, if poetry does contain thought, it reveals how *poets* think about things. Jesse Prinz and Eric Mandelbaum advance precisely this idea. They argue that thoughts in poems are necessarily *de dicto*, for

it would be absurd to say, for instance, that Romeo's claim that "Juliet is the Sun" can be replaced by the co-referring phrase: Romeo thinks that "Juliet is the star around which Earth orbits". According to Prinz and Mandelbaum, this is because poets "intentionally introduce a filter between mind and world". Poets, they expand, "are interested in ways of expressing things, not just in what gets expressed" (63-87, 70, 71).

This may be a widely held view of what poets do and the most obvious way in which to evaluate the *de re*/*de dicto* distinction in relation to poetry. Nevertheless, I think that Prinz and Mandelbaum's account does not do justice to what many poets try to establish, specifically when anymals are at stake. Let me conclude this chapter with the following passage from an essay by the novelist and philosopher Patricia De Martelaere. For me, it precisely delineates a poetic paradox, which consists in the longing to reach for reality in text. Her view of the essence of writing stands at odds with that of Prinz and Mandelbaum:

> Or concerning the cat. She lies on the mat, curled up in her sleep, purring, and submerged in herself, so peculiar, and you would want to draw her nearer to you, in language. Like a madman you start writing, from head to tail, hair by hair, this cat (not another one), you write: cat and a chain of adjectives, like: soft, grey, warm, shiny, and the more you write, the more you desire that the words would not describe the cat, but would let her exist the way she wholly is. Hundreds of pages you could go on, volumes full of the unattainable cat on the mat, and all is nothing, it does not even replace the most insignificant motion, the motion with which you go towards the cat and caress her, without writing: I caress the cat, without thinking: the cat, the cat. Do you caress the cat then? You caress the cat outside of language, the cat who isn't a cat, caressing that isn't caressing: nothing. The language of the writer wants to be like this caressing of the cat. The writer's paradox is that of someone who simultaneously wants to factually caress the cat, like it only can happen in motion, and wants to express in words: I caress the cat. (20-21) [37]

Poets draw anymals into language; they even draw how anymals see the world into language. Instead of choosing between presenting thought *de dicto* or *de re*, we might rather conclude that poets show us that thoughts cannot be fixed to subjects as we normally tend to think. Moreover, it can be argued that the *de re*/*de dicto* distinction does not take into account that beliefs can be about a thing in the *Umwelt* of an anymal. The *Umwelt* is a notion coined by the biologist Jakob von Uexküll to refer to an anymal's subjective world. Despite the fact that the adjective 'subjective' may evoke an image of an inner world, this

concept levels the subject/object division since, as Von Uexküll explains, the *Umwelt* is a continued interaction between the anymal and its surroundings. Subjective experience shapes the anymal's world. This notion, which is central in the next chapter, shows us that what Ekman and Murray achieve might be summarised as a *de re* description of embodied thought in terms of the *Umwelt*, which results in non-anthropomorphised anymals. In this way, even the electric being of thinking anymals has a place in poetry.

37 Of over de poes. Ze ligt op de mat opgekruld te slapen en te spinnen, zo in zichzelf verzonken, zo vreemd, en je zou haar in taal naar je toe willen halen. Als een razende begin je te schrijven, van kop tot staart, haartje voor haartje, déze poes (geen andere), zoals ze zo ligt te slapen (niet anders), je schrijft: poes, en reeksen adjectieven daarbij, zoals: zacht, grijs, warm, glanzend, en hoe meer je beschrijft hoe meer je zou willen dat de woorden de poes niet zouden beschrijven, maar haar helemaal, zoals ze is, zouden doen zijn. Honderden bladzijden kun je zo doorgaan, boekdelen vol, over de onbereikbare poes op de mat, en het is allemaal niets, het vervangt zelfs niet het meest onbetekenende gebaar, het gebaar waarmee je naar de poes toegaat en haar streelt, zonder te schrijven: ik streel de poes, zonder te denken: de poes, de poes. Streel je dan de poes? Je streelt de poes buiten taal, de poes die geen poes is, een strelen dat geen strelen is: niets. De taal van de schrijver wil zijn zoals dit strelen van de poes. De paradox van de schrijver is die van degene die tegelijk écht de poes wil strelen, zoals dat enkel in een gebaar kan gebeuren, en wil zeggen, in woorden: Ik streel de poes. (24 - 25)

3

OPENNESS, WHOLENESS, AND GROWTH: EXPLORING ADDITIONAL ZOOPOETICAL TOOLS

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I commented on Ekman's *The Dog* and, following Goatly and Caracciolo, discussed the techniques of pronoun dropping, nominalisation, neologism, and description *ex negativo*. These zoopoetical tools serve to diminish anthropomorphism and open up the possibility of depicting the dog's thoughts as embodied. Following on from that discussion, in this chapter I examine how zoopoetical tools reach beyond the words of a text and shape the entanglements of reader and poem, human and anymal.

The notion of *Umwelt*, which I introduced in the former chapter, will prove helpful again in this undertaking. The biologist Jakob von Uexküll coined the term to show, on the one hand, that there are as many perspectives on the environment as there are anymal species and, on the other, that a perspective manifests itself in the world (as being enclosed in a private mind). This paradigm shift, through which anymals went from being seen as mindless machines to carriers of meaning, calls for new terminology. The term *Umwelt* is one response to that call (Uexküll 215), as is the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty's notion body-subject and consciousness as "a take on the exterior world" (*Nature* 146). Another is the word "commingling", which the philosopher John Haugeland has used to refer to the lack of essential distinctions between mind, body, and environment (*Having* 208).

These theorists' terminological innovations are useful when broaching the connections between zoopoetry and empathy, since the poets I discuss are engaged in the same quest to preserve the experiential world of anymals in language. Furthermore, we see the same push towards a paradigm shift in the tools deployed in poetry; poets do not deem subjective experience – even that of anymals – to be private. This paves the way for empathic engagements with anymals.

A remark that Uexküll makes in the preface to his famous *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans* serves to lead us into this chapter. "Certain convictions", he claims, "are able to bar the entrance to those worlds [*Umwelten*]" (41). Of these convictions, the ideas that anymals are automata and best understood when dissected are the most prohibitive. For Uexküll, it would appear that our passage into a given anymal's *Umwelt* is precluded by neither a lack of imagination nor any physical incompatibilities between humans and anymals; it is simply a matter of humans cleaving to the wrong convictions. I argue that whereas these convictions often bar the way into anymals' worlds, zoopoetical tools can open them up. Attending to anymals in ways that fall outside of the machine paradigm indeed demands a new language, as well as tools that exemplify a new paradigm of nature as commingled and entwined.

In the previous chapter I introduced the techniques of pronoun dropping, nominalisation, neologism, and descriptions *ex negativo*; in this chapter I will deepen this examination of zoopoetical tools by way of an analysis of what I am calling 'questions and hesitations', 'commingling words', rhythm, and metaphor. Whilst keeping Uexküll's remark about convictions having consequences in mind, I explore these zoopoetical tools' effects. They not only relate to the notions of entanglement and wholeness that I have mentioned above; they also suggest that reducing anthropomorphism need not necessarily result in anymals being presented as unknowable, mystified objects. Poets, especially at the beginning of the twentieth century, often mystified the anymals with which they were concerned out of reverence (Atkins). When poets started using zoopoetical tools, however, they began finding ways to enter anymal worlds whilst still circumnavigating anthropomorphism. In short, I show how these tools direct us towards openness, help make it possible to present the anymal as a whole, and instigate growth by using rhythm and metaphor to reach across the boundaries of words on paper.

There are probably more zoopoetical tools than I discuss in this chapter. My aim is not comprehensive enumeration, but rather to show why and how some poetical tools and tropes are helpful when it comes to seeing anymals as agents with experiential worlds. In this sense, discussing the poems and tools works in two ways. At one level, by exploring how zoopoems use tools I gradually come to explicate the characteristics of the poems in the fourth category of zoopoems that I delineated in the Introduction to this study, in which anymals are set forth in their alterity. At another level, this discussion leads me to an understanding of what is needed to present anymals as themselves. The Dutch poet and anthologist Guus Luijters writes that poets' true artistry comes out in their zoopoetry (26). Although he does not explain this statement, I think that the explanation has to do, at least in part, with poets' abundant use of zoo-

poetical tools in anymal poems. For these techniques, I have suggested, reduce anthropomorphism and envision nature as commingled and entwined.

3.2 Questions and hesitations: Openness

3.2.1 Questions: Opening up mind and world

One of the most important traits of a poet, John Keats proposed, was a "negative capability" whereby "man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason" (Keats). Keats scorns the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge for searching for a higher truth in poetry through the exercise of reason (Keats). It may seem a bit of a Romantic cliché to place knowledge in opposition to mysteries, and poetry in opposition to fact and reason. That said, Keats' more subtle observation – that poetry allows for uncertainties, doubt, and questioning – has value for my purposes in this chapter. Zoopoetry often expresses uncertainty in the form of questions and hesitations. As I discuss in this section, it does so in roughly two ways. In the first, questions and hesitations serve to examine how we can come closer to the anymal; in the second, they create or enhance the anymal's alterity.

In many of her zoopoems, the poet Judith Herzberg poses questions in the first of these two modes. In "The Well-Known Masonry Nests" there are three, maybe even four questions in the first two quatrains:

The Well-Known Masonry Nests

Is it not somewhat presumptuous
to put oneself in a swallow's position?
What is this phenomenon
"imagining oneself into" to aim for this.

But then: how else to name it
to recognise this thinking in vain

again and again searching for the spot where
year after year there used to be your nest.

This awake not able to believe
You fly to it, by it, right at
the place, but clean and closed and plain
where access was always gained.[38] (11, ll. 1-12)

We can extract the following questions:

1. Is it not somewhat presumptuous to put oneself in a swallow's position?
2. What is this phenomenon of "imagining oneself into"? and, if we do not take 2 and 3 to be one question;
3. What does it mean to aim for this? And then;
4. How else to name it (when recognising this thinking)?

With this fourth question, Herzberg partly answers the first three questions: we do not have another name by which to recognise this swallow's thinking. This question rhetorically sweeps away the human/anymal divide. In 'answering' three questions by means of a fourth question and whilst also leaving the questions open, the poem affects our understanding. By giving a poetic answer in the final lines, Herzberg does not dismiss this preparatory questioning as unimportant or redundant. Rather, it serves to probe tentatively possible ways of coming closer to the swallow's life. Whereas an answer framed in terms of a simple 'yes' or 'no' would compromise the difficult task of identifying with the swallow, Herzberg's probing and weighing of possible connections with the swallow's experiential world eventually affords us an expansive picture of

38 De Bekende Gemetselde Nesten

Is het niet tamelijk aanmatigend
zich in een zwaluw te verplaatsen
wat is dit voor een fenomeen
'zich in te leven' dat beogen.

Maar ook: hoe moet het anders heten
dit denken te herkennen vergeefs
steeds weer de plek te zoeken waar
jaar in jaar uit je nest was.

Dit wakker niet te kunnen geloven
je vliegt erheen, erlangs, er pal
op af, maar gaaf, en dicht, en glad,
wat altijd toegang gaf. ("De Bekende Gemetselde Nesten" 11, ll. 1-12)

what cross-species empathy might entail. Indeed, by dint of her wary questioning, Herzberg suggests other ways in which we might empathise, that can be compared to Costello's/Coetzee's probing and weighing.[39]

Although questions appear often in Herzberg's poems, they are even more frequent in her zoopoems, in which she searches for ways of knowing, engaging with, and rendering an anymal's life. I counted the questions that she poses in the volumes *Zoals* (1992) and *Wat Zij Wilde Schilderen* (1996). Four out of the 42 poems gathered in *Zoals* are zoopoems. Of the 38 non-zoopoetical poems, six contain questions or hesitations. Of the zoopoems, three out of the four contain questions or hesitations. Approximately the same ratio appears in *Wat Zij Wilde Schilderen*; the volume consists of 40 poems, of which five are zoopoems. Whereas questions or hesitations appear in only five of 35 the non-zoopoetical poems, two of these five zoopoems contain questions or hesitations. This relatively high number of questions is not exceptional in zoopoetry; in fact many zoopoems thrive on this negative capability. In "The Well-known Masonry Nests", questions pave the way for identification. It is not clear to whom the 'you' in the final lines of the poem refers; it might point to the swallow, the human reader, or them both at the same time. This identification is made possible thanks to the questions posed in the first lines, which, by having us ask with Herzberg "How else to name it?", draw us into the feeling of searching for a nest.

In contrast to this first mode of zoopoetical questioning, which seeks to draw anymals near, questions can also be used to mystify anymals. It is in the light of this second sense of questioning and hesitating that we can read Elizabeth Bishop's famous poem "The Moose". The speaker takes a long bus trip, dozes off, and is then awakened when "the bus driver stops with a jolt". A moose "has come out of the impenetrable woods" (172), and stands in front of the bus:

> Taking her time,
> she looks the bus over,
> grand, otherworldly.
> Why, why do we feel
> (we all feel) this sweet
> sensation of joy?
> (173, ll. 151-156)

---

39 See chapter 1 for the various ways in which Coetzee/Costello labels engagements with anymals. That Herzberg's work is motivated by a wish to empathise with anymals is also reflected in the poem "The Way" ("Zoals"), which is central to my Epilogue to this study. "The Way" puts into words the same mood and atmosphere as that found in "The Well-Known Masonry Nests", which centres upon the wordless, intuitive searching and knowing that humans and anymals share (see *Zoals* 6).

The moose takes her time to examine the bus and Bishop takes her time by using caesuras and commas to mimic the pace of the creature and let the reader imagine the moose in full. After the words "grand" and "otherworldly" comes the question of "why do we feel / (we all feel) this sweet / sensation of joy?" The question hangs there, unanswered. All of us who have had encounters with anymals may recognise the bus passengers' shared joy. This feeling could be seen as an instance of "biophilia", Edward Wilson's term for the innate tendency to affiliate with all that lives (*Biophilia*).[40] It is this biophilia that Bishop wants to highlight and maybe even stretch to encompass readers' experiences by calling it a 'sweet sensation', the alliteration serving as an invitation to share in the joy. As in "The Well-Known Masonry Nests", a question remains unanswered. Yet whereas Herzberg partially answers her probing questions in a bid to find ways of engaging with the swallow, Bishop enhances the mystery of the moose by not answering the question. In many ways this emphasises the moose's otherness; her sheer being is a mystery. Rather than bridging a gap between her and the passengers, this mysteriousness binds the passengers and the reader in a shared biophilia.

In a manner that resembles Bishop's mode of questioning, D.H. Lawrence recounts the hearing of a tortoise's scream in "Tortoise Shout". These are the first lines of the poem:

> I thought he was dumb,
> I said he was dumb,
> Yet I've heard him cry.
>
> First faint scream,
> Out of life's unfathomable dawn,
> Far off, so far, like a madness, under the horizon's dawning rim,
> Far, far off, far scream.
>
> Tortoise *in extremis*.
>
> Why were we crucified into sex?
> Why were we not left rounded off, and finished in ourselves,
> As we began,
> As he certainly began, so perfectly alone?
> (ll. 1–12)

40 In his later work, Wilson points out that all species experience this affiliation, not humans alone (see for instance *Half-Earth* 211).

We read the astonishment at the shout of the tortoise, which he had assumed was dumb. The scream then carries the speaker to an unfathomable dawn, perhaps the beginning of the earth. In lines 1-12, Lawrence mystifies the anymal by way of reference to Plato's *Symposium*. In Plato's text, the notions of perfect love and being are depicted as a rounded-off, hermaphroditic creature that gets divided by the gods out of fear that it might threaten their omnipotence (190). To Lawrence, the tortoise is such a creature: undivided, "perfectly alone". The questions that the poem poses are not used to open up the possibility of connections being made between the speaker and the tortoise. In fact, the tortoise is already characterised as perfect and the questions are used to demonstrate the speaker's deplorable state, which makes the poem an example of group 2 (in which anymals represent loss).

The literary scholar Elizabeth Atkins explains the relationship between the mystification of the anymal in zoopoems on the one hand and a speaker's deplorable state on the other. She writes that at the beginning of the twentieth century a radical change in poets' attitude towards anymals becomes evident. Around that time, it came to pass that anymals were no longer seen as symbols for depraved human character traits, but as creatures that provided a counterbalance to a sick human society. As causes for this attitudinal change, Atkins mentions the influence of "modern biology" and related to that "a shift in religious ideas", urbanisation, and psychoanalysis. All of these causes led people to reconsider humans' supposedly exceptional status. Poets who published in this period, including D.H. Lawrence and Elizabeth Bishop, not only saw animals as far more equal to humans than before. They even claimed that anymals formed "the only untried way of escape from despair" – a despair caused by the Great War. Whereas before the modernist tradition took hold anymals were mainly used in human imagery, the anymals in poetry at the beginning of the twentieth century suggested a new means of escaping a "sick civilization" (Atkins 273, 263, 264, 266, 267, 267).

Atkins points out that these poets' attitude towards anymals almost comprised a new religion, an observation that somewhat chafes with her description of their poetry as "carefully literal" (263). It is as if Atkins sees a close connection between reverence and literalness. Indeed, as in Bishop's "The Moose", Lawrence uses questions to enhance the reverence and the mystery surrounding the anymal. Rather than recognising how anymals and humans are entangled with one another, Lawrence's poetry heightens the anymal's otherness

through questions.[41] In both Bishop's and Lawrence's poems, the unanswered questions resemble those questions that are sometimes asked in prayer – in reverence and acceptance of not knowing. It is hard to see the anymal as itself, for just as people project desires onto God in religion, they also use the anymal in a religiously motivated search for a "way out of despair".[42]

Whereas Lawrence and Bishop do not even recognise that there can be mutual relations between species, Herzberg suggests their proximity. Her questions let the swallow and human poetically coincide in a shared experience of ceaselessly searching for the nest in the final stanza. To achieve this effect, she also uses rhythm, which mimics the swallow's flight. She does not give the swallow a voice, probably because that would be even more presumptuous than placing oneself in the swallow's position. In the previous chapter, we saw how Les Murray and Kerstin Ekman dared to use a range of zoopoetical tools to present voiced anymals. In their poems, save for the questions that anymals themselves might have, 'questioning' has become redundant as a zoopoetical tool for relating the reader to the anymal, for that bridge has already been crossed by giving them a voice.

3.2.2 Hesitations: Recognising the indefiniteness of the world

Whereas questions thus either heighten an anymal's mystery or bridge the gap between humans and anymals, hesitations have a somewhat different effect. They highlight the poem's textuality and – perhaps for this very reason – the provisionality of any answers it offers too. We find hesitations in many poems by Elizabeth Bishop, including "The Fish". After a series of observations, we read:

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41 Another example of mystifying an anymal by posing questions is William Blake's "The Tyger", in which even fourteen questions do not serve to bridge the gap between the speaker and the tiger. Indeed, they almost seem to warn us against his unapproachability.

42 According to the philosopher and novelist Iris Murdoch "some of D.H. Lawrence's work is spoiled by too much Lawrence" (*From* 226). In her view, an overly present self results in mediocre art. The anymals in Lawrence's work struggle to get any attention that does not mystify them. In "Tortoise Shout", the deplorable state of the speaker is more important than the tortoise, who serves as a symbol. For a comprehensive discussion of the relation between Murdoch's aesthetics and its importance for zoopoetics, see chapter 5.

I admired his sullen face,
the mechanism of his jaw,
and then I saw
that from his lower lip
—if you could call it a lip—
grim, wet, and weaponlike,
hung five old pieces of fish-line,
(43, ll. 45-51)

The hesitation "if you could call it a lip" adds to the rather parlando style of "The Fish", as does the repetition of the word 'lip'. Leaving the hesitation in the poem contributes to its 'spontaneity'. Together with 'mystery' and 'accuracy', this quality evokes the Bishopean idea that we might see "something new and strangely alive" in a poem (*Poems* 702-706). More often, Bishop uses the word "rather" to correct herself in a poem or withdraws words that may appear too definite. Consider again the poem "The Moose", in which Bishop writes of the moose that: "She stands there, looms, rather" (*Complete Poems* 172). Here "rather" highlights the moment and urges the reader to envision the moose more carefully. Bishop interlards a poem with "rathers" to emphasise the sense of 'nowness' – as if someone is talking or thinking at this very moment. The "rather" in Bishop's poem "Sandpiper" (see chapter 3.4.2.) has a similar effect: "He runs, he runs straight through it, watching his toes. / - Watching, rather, the spaces of sand between them." It is as if the hesitation happens now, when reading it. We readers look again at the sandpiper, because, in envisioning the text, we first saw the bird looking at his toes before being prompted to attend to the bird more closely, whereupon we see what he is actually looking at: the sand between the toes. In an early letter from 1953 Bishop endorses Morris Croll's description of the Baroque style as an ideal way of writing: "their purpose [of the writers of Baroque prose] was to portray not a thought, but a mind thinking" (qtd. in *One Art* 12). Like many poets, Bishop strives to write poetry in action, portray minds in action, and come close to creating life.[43]

A less straightforward way of hesitating works by using simile. We find a beautiful example of hesitation through simile in Ida Gerhardt's "The Hedgehog" ("Het Egeltje"):

43 In Bishop's case, I would say that it is not so much a mind thinking as a mind *seeing*. The reader needs to "see something strangely alive" (Spires), but this is only possible when the poem focuses on what it sees. For Bishop, clean observation is the highest attainable virtue in an artist (or anyone, for she does not distinguish between common and artistic vocations).

The Hedgehog

The hedgehog always at the hour of sunset
comes shambling along the tiling of the shed.

The breathing of his pointed snout
leaves, on the cold ground, traces that go in and out

around the silent human, who, with patience
accustoms his shyness and fills the earthenware dish

and waits until a small ragged hand
gropingly grips the dish's edge.

Then the animal drinks. In a moment, as if they understand
the two share glances, are content.[44] (147, ll. 1-10)

The poem describes how a human being tries to gain a hedgehog's trust by providing him with something to drink. The final sentence contains a puzzling simile: "Then the animal drinks. For a moment, as if they understand / the two share glances, are content". How does the "as if" affect our understanding of the poem? The human and hedgehog are both satisfied and look at each other. The mutual glance occasions Gerhardt's suggestion, made by way of a simile, that the human and hedgehog sort of understand each other. What exactly happens between them, however, remains unclear – and Gerhardt leaves it at that. The gesture of using a simile to mention 'understanding' and withdraw it at the same time could be described as imprecise. As I see it, however, it is a sign

44 Het egeltje

De egel komt in 't eendere schemeruur
schuifelen langs de plavuizen van de schuur.

De ademsporen van zijn spitse snuit
gaan op de kille stenen aan en uit

omtrent de stille mens, die met geduld
zijn schuwheid went en de aarden schotel vult

en wacht, totdat een kleine ruige hand
zich tastend vastgrijpt aan de schotelrand.

Dan drinkt het dier. Even, als in verstaan
zien twee bevredigden elkander aan. ("Het Egeltje" 147)

of poetic strength that Gerhardt allows for intuitions, hunches, or hesitations and tries to capture all shades of thinking and pondering.

We may ask ourselves what we lose when we only have room for proven truths, although the answers may fall outside the scope of (exact) science. Among other things we lose what Martha Nussbaum calls "other ways of being precise", a phrase that she uses in the context of her argument that Anglo-American philosophy has never considered these alternative modes of precision. Instead, it has always held onto "a style correct, scientific, abstract, hygienically pallid", even when it comes to ethical thought (*Love's Knowledge* 19). In this poem, the simile's hesitance opens up a possibility of cross-species understanding. Hesitating through simile recalls Ekman's technique of description *ex negativo*, in that avoiding saying something straightforwardly but rather raising it as a possibility is like bringing an idea to mind by describing what it is not.

Like description *ex negativo*, hesitation is a zoopoetical tool, since it directs us towards openness. This openness needs further explanation, however. Of course, the zoopoetical tools of questions and hesitation stand in stark opposition to the convictions that Uexküll wrote about. Whereas convictions close minds off from possibilities, questions and hesitations open them up. When I use the word 'openness' I mean the opposite of definitive answers and fixed ideas, such as the unquestioned human-animal binary, for instance. Questions and hesitations in poems prompt us to rethink our convictions – if not always in an active and conscious way. Moreover, leaving questions unanswered or unanswerable in a poem, or presenting hesitations as a way to consider a possibility, allows us to imagine tentative ways of probing and wondering.[45]

My interpretation of questions and hesitations as zoopoetical tools directing us to openness presupposes a poetics that conflicts with more traditional, anthropocentric conceptions of poetry, which take poems to be thoughts or thought scripts. Thoughts necessarily belong to someone and are articulated in someone's mind – whether the poet's, speaker's, or reader's. Going by this understanding of what poems essentially are, one might argue that, rather than opening up a world, questions and criticises indicate someone's indecisive mind. The philosopher Eileen John criticises this understanding of poems as thoughts. In particular, she discusses three influential proponents of the

45 Angela Leighton argues that hesitation ought to be a more prominent feature of philosophy. She approvingly quotes Ludwig Wittgenstein, who suggests that "language somehow broken down, stuttery and uncertain … offer[s] a greater approximation to philosophical investigations of knowledge than clear, consecutive prose does" (167). Leighton refers to another remark from Wittgenstein, in which he claims that philosophy "ought really to be written only as a *poetic composition*" (qtd. in Leighton 167).

thought-script model: Kendall Walton, Helen Vendler, and Glyn Maxwell.[46] In weighing up their positions, John cites Maxwell to indicate some of the difficulties with treating poetry as thought:

> Poets are voices upon time. What makes poetry so giddyingly different from other forms is how naturally and plainly its reader can inhabit that voice. For we all consciously know that poetry is written in the everyday material of language, but at a deeper cerebral level surely it becomes easier to imagine the voice one's own, that we could be thinking it, living it, saying it. *We could have come to just this place*. (qtd. in John "Poetry and Directions" 456)

To Maxwell, a poem "coherently expresses the presence of a human creature" (qtd. in John "Poetry and Directions" 457). Whereas John has problems mainly with the idea that poems are ultimately expressed thoughts that presuppose a subject expressing them (the poet, speaker, or reader), my concern goes further. I would like to stress how Maxwell's view of poetry is essentially anthropocentric, like Fludernik's approach to literature. What makes poems stand out from the rest of literature, Maxwell claims, is the ease with which humans can inhabit their voices. On this account, poems' apparent substitutability with humans' inner voices suggests that poems are ultimately human voices. Clearly this view results from the initial conviction that poems are thought scripts, which aligns with a more fundamental point a critic could have: typically people hesitate and ask questions, so why would these tools be zoopoetical?

Let me get back to the hesitation in Gerhardt's "The Hedgehog". Although it does so very cautiously, the hesitant simile examines ways of engaging with the hedgehog. It presents us a hesitation concerning how he experiences the world. Is this Gerhardt's hesitation? Or does it become my own in reading it? Does reading the simile and then experiencing the hesitation as an up-in-the-air possibility of mutual understanding between human and hedgehog count as my or Gerhardt's thought? Does it tell me something about Gerhardt's mind? When I read the poem, are the lines my own thoughts? And moreover: are they *thoughts*? Somehow the rubric of 'thought' in the sense of 'propositions

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46 The interpretation of zoopoems becomes a more difficult undertaking if poems are conceived of as thoughts or thought scripts, since first the poet's voice needs to be positioned before readers can turn their attention to the anymal. An example of this can be found in Brett C. Millier's biography of Elizabeth Bishop, in which he writes the following of "The Fish": "details about the speaker who is examining the fish are as important as those of the fish itself" (154). The poem certainly does not clarify why details about the speaker are as important as those of the fish itself. "The Fish" is a poem of 76 lines in which an 'I' is mentioned only seven times and whose undivided attention is aimed at the fish in any case.

belonging to a mind' no longer seems to capture what goes on in the reader. John criticises the idea that thought ownership is essential to a poem in her reflection on Elizabeth Bishop's poem "At the Fishhouses":

> It seems that poetry offers experience of thought that has an intimate presence, but that nonetheless lacks some of the markers of one's own thought. Irregular progression of a train of thought, thinking the answer to a question I did not formulate, moving to a new thought without effort or choice – these all seem familiar to me as a reader of poetry. In such experiences my thinking may be, in its content, well directed by the poem, yet it seems not to be (or not yet) fully my thought. ("Poetry and Directions" 463)

John claims that even though the lines in a poem are read by me, they are not *my* thoughts. In this connection, she writes about the "derailment of thought" and formulates the phenomenology of reading a poem as follows: "it seems that behind-the-scenes absorption, storage, decomposition, reinforcement, and structuring are all at work in thought-processes, but cannot all be claimed as "one's own thinking"" (465). Nor, John expands, does the poem itself assume "control or closure of the thinking it initiates in various ways" ("Poetry and Directions" 464).

If John is right, three points follow. Firstly, poems are not merely thoughts and therefore cannot be seen as thought scripts. Secondly, insofar as they are thoughts, poems are not necessarily *my* thoughts when I am thinking them (indeed, one might ask more generally: what does it mean for a thought to be one's own?). Thirdly, insofar as they are thoughts, poems are controlled by neither me, the poet, nor the poem. In the quotation above, John refers to the function of questions: whilst reading a poem I can be looking for an answer to a question asked in the poem. For John, such questions would neither belong to someone nor solely tell us something about someone's mind. In the case of "The Hedgehog", the disguised question rises out of a relationship between hedgehog and human, much like the questions in "The Well-Known Masonry Nests", which have to do with the relationship between human and swallow. Maybe this – that the questions rise out of a relationship – applies less to Bishop's questions and even less to those posed by Lawrence. Indeed, in Lawrence's poems the questions serve only to highlight the human mind and his reverence for the anymal as a way out of despair. As such, they bear markers of the speaker's own thought. The questions and simile hesitation in Herzberg's and Gerhardt's poems, by contrast, do not direct our attention to a mind or thought. Rather, these questions are found in the relationships that we already have with anymals and come to the surface when we look closely at anymals.

Here, the openness occasioned by questions and hesitations forms a space in which human-anymal entanglements get shaped and anymals show themselves.

3.3 Commingling words: Wholeness

In the previous section, we have seen that poets such as Bishop and Lawrence approach the anymal as a whole, but need to mystify the anymal in order to do so. The new attitude towards anymals, which set in at the beginning of the twentieth century, might represent a different way of evaluating anymals, in that it considers them "a way out of despair" (Atkins 267). Nonetheless, it again turns them into something other than themselves. One important difference between Bishop and Lawrence on the one hand and Herzberg and Murray as we saw in his poem "Pigs" on the other is that the former two poets consider anymals to be unknowable. Doing away with mystification implies that anymals are knowable. Not in the sense that we can approach them behaviouristically as if they were (simple) machines, stripped of all riddles, but knowable in that we can understand them as some*one* – a living being – rather than as some*thing*. To regard an anymal from this perspective asks that we leave Cartesian dualism behind and not interpret all human behaviour as inherently meaningful and be puzzled when this default attitude fails.[47] My claim is that we can observe anymals' subjective experiences, at least in part.

Wholeness does not only mean that which has not been dissected into parts (Uexküll, recall, holds that we often see as anymals in terms of their parts).

47 When someone yells at someone else, for instance, we take that behaviour to mean something (anger aimed at the other person, perhaps, or despair occasioned by the other person). If it appears that the other person has nothing to do with the screamer then we are puzzled until the behaviour is explained (through mental illness for instance). In his philosophy of moral responsibility, Peter Strawson introduces the term "reactive attitude" for our default emotional reaction towards people. In special cases, in which this default attitude is unable to explain behaviour, we take up an "objective attitude" (Strawson). In these cases, we see behaviour as something that happens to someone rather than as purposefully acted out. For anymals it seems to be the other way around: their behaviour tends to be evaluated from an objective attitude and be labeled as "happenings", unless it is impossible to explain the behaviour in any other way than as intended.

It is also opposed to a Cartesian definition of the mind as detached from the body. Leaving this Cartesian distinction behind is easier said than done, as we have already learned from Daniel Dennett's remark about being haunted by the terminology that comes with it (*Consciousness* 107). The philosopher John Haugeland spells out what such undertaking would mean:

> [T]he Cartesian separation … is still so pervasive as to be almost invisible. In particular, interrelationist accounts retain a principled distinction between the mental and the corporeal – a distinction that is reflected in contrasts like semantics versus syntax, the space of reasons versus the space of causes, or the intentional versus the physical. (Notice that each of these contrasts can be heard either as higher versus lower "level" or as inner versus outer "sphere"). ("Mind" 233)

Maybe Descartes is not the only one to blame for all of these divisions in our thinking, but the compartmental thinking that rests on this mind-body dualism has had far-reaching consequences in many fields. Note here that Haugeland's view resembles Dennett's critique of the unknowability of animal minds, which stresses how the erroneous assumption that the mind is separate from the body "haunts us" (chapter 1). Haugeland, however, takes the ultimate consequences of abandoning dualism into consideration. Whereas Dennett still spoke derogatively about Elizabeth Marshall's "poetry", Haugeland understands that we need to revise other binaries as well. Giving up the idea that the mind is separable from the body asks that we re-evaluate the words that we use to honour the wholeness of psycho-physical subjects.

Indeed, when we read the work of researchers who try to break down one or more divisions, we can see the need for new terminology, not only to describe our body and mind, but also to transform our all too cerebral ideas about meaning. Uexküll, for instance, initially coined the term *Umwelt* to indicate the different perspectives that creatures have on their environment and stress that the concept of 'perspectives' is not to be understood as another word for secluded minds; the environment is part of the *Umwelt*, in the sense that the environment bears meaning. As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Merleau-Ponty uses the term 'body-subject' to go beyond Cartesian dualism. Following in the wake of Merleau-Ponty's work, biosemioticians emphasise that meaning is a natural phenomenon. Jesper Hoffmeyer, for instance, writes that there is "nothing mysterious about the phenomenal world, for it is deeply embedded in bodily semiotics" (89). To grasp the lack of fundamental distinctions between mind, body, and world, Haugeland introduces the word "commingling":

> The contrary of this separation ... is something I would like to call the intimacy of the mind's embodiment and embeddedness in the world. The term 'intimacy' is meant to suggest more than just necessary interrelation or interdependence but a kind of *commingling* or *integralness* of mind, body and world – that is to undermine their very distinctness. (*Having Thought* 208)

At first sight, presenting anymals as themselves instead of symbolically anthropomorphised beings would seem to be a different undertaking than that of solving the philosophical or biological problems of dualism and behaviourism. Still, the dictum of presenting anymals "as themselves" implies a search for wholeness, which is the underlying pursuit. In this sense poetry and philosophy are not very different. This can be seen in the "commingling words" used by poets. I borrow this expression from John Haugeland, because it hints at all the de-binarisation that is going on in poetry: sometimes these commingling words capture the ways in which a mind and body coincide, at other moments they figure a merging of mind, body, and environment.[48] In many poems we can find words that show anymals as lived bodies and meaning carriers, who are entwined with humans or their environment. In the following poem by John Updike, which uses almost everyday language to describe the death of a puppy, there is a clear moment at which the dog is presented as a psychophysical whole:

> Dog's Death
>
> She must have been kicked unseen or brushed by a car.
> Too young to know much, she was beginning to learn
> To use the newspapers spread on the kitchen floor
> And to win, wetting there, the words, "Good dog! Good dog!"
> (51, ll. 1-4)

The family try to play with the dog, unaware of the internal bleeding caused by a car or kick. The next morning they find her "twisted and limp but still alive" "beneath the youngest's bed". Although they immediately take her to the vet, it is too late:

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48 In *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, Val Plumwood relates patriarchic thinking in anymal stories to Cartesian dualism.

In the car to the vet's, on my lap, she tried

To bite my hand and died. I stroked her warm fur
And my wife called in a voice imperious with tears.
Though surrounded by love that would have upheld her,
Nevertheless she sank and, stiffening, disappeared.

Back home, we found that in the night her frame,
Drawing near to dissolution, had endured the shame
Of diarrhoea and had dragged across the floor
To a newspaper carelessly left there. Good dog.
(51-52, ll. 11-19)

The poem moves us through the modest and candid style in which the sad accident is recounted. This style might lead us to overlook an important moment in the poem, at which outside and inside, subjective feeling and the objective world, are commingled. It is in the simple word "win" in combination with "words" in line 4 that we can feel body and mind entwined. Normally, one would say that winning something objectively describes the outcome of a game or contest. In this poem, however, the dog wins the words "good dog!" Although "win" is taken out of its usual competitive context, it is accurate because we imagine the dog's world through this kind of winning; the word evokes the image of a puppy, who enthusiastically receives the words 'good dog', wagging her tail or whole body as puppies do. Since the words "win" and "words" are not commonly combined, as readers we are asked to do more than we usually might; although the connotations 'to win' might lead our reading in one direction, we have to realise that for the dog "words" are something that can be won. This realisation is touching because the instant in which we combine the words spawns the image of the puppy. Humans may be unfamiliar with the experience of winning words, but the speaker describes what happens to the dog in those terms without shifting perspectives. It would appear, then, that the dog's experience is visible. That is to say that the reader sees something in the behaviour of the dog that is best described as "to win words".

In line with one of the aims of zoopoetry, we can read commingling words as a test: when the combination of the words makes the reader envision the dog more vividly, it must be a good description of what the poet 'saw'. Anthropomorphisms do the opposite: they divert the reader's attention and the living anymal is lost from view. Poets who commingle words use what would be called "the direct perception argument" in philosophy. This argument supports the idea that anymals are conscious and presupposes the inseparability

of body and mind. To proponents of this argument, the 'direct' in "direct perception argument" refers to the conviction that we do not *infer* a mind from behaviour. Instead, the fact that mind and body are one means that we *see* lived, intentional, and minded bodies. The philosopher John Searle starts defending this position by describing a common daily experience: his dog greeting him upon returning from work:

> I get home from work and Ludwig rushes out to meet me. He jumps up and down and wags his tail. I am certain that (a) he is conscious; (b) he is aware of my presence (intentionality); and (c) that awareness produces in him a state of pleasure (thought process). How could anyone deny either a, b or c? (207)

For Searle, it would be impossible to consider his dog mindless. Were we to do so then we, with Descartes, would perhaps feel more secure in calling anymals machines and thus deem our the emotions that we supposedly attribute to anymals a pathetic fallacy. The other route, taken by Searle himself, is expressed in Updike's poem. It is as if Updike is saying that what is going on here, when looking at the pup, is best described as 'winning words'. How can anyone call this directly perceived emotion into question? Any other description would be less accurate.

Arguably, "the shame of diarrhoea" in line 18 is another moment at which we can see the puppy's subjective experience in the poem. There is a difference, however, in ascribing "shame" and the urge to "win" to the puppy. In contrast to 'winning', "shame" cannot be seen exclusively from a third-person perspective. Updike uses the phrase "to win" in a way that turns an objective word into a feeling, through which it becomes an apt example of a commingling word. Whereas we can remain in the sceptical mode with regard to the "shame" mentioned in line 18, asking whether Updike is anthropomorphising the dog, with the 'winning' we cannot.

These in-between or commingling words are often present in zoopoems. Elizabeth Bishop uses the tool halfway through "The Fish":

> While his gills were breathing in
> the terrible oxygen
> —the frightening gills,
> fresh and crisp with blood,
> that can cut so badly—
> I thought of the coarse white flesh
> packed in like feathers,
> the big bones and the little bones,

> the dramatic reds and blacks
> of his shiny entrails,
> and the pink swim-bladder
> like a big peony.
> (42, ll. 22-33)

This part of "The Fish" seems to be full of shifts in perspective. With each adjective we might ask: "who is experiencing what"? The oxygen mentioned in line 23, for instance, is terrible *for the fish*. We know this, but presenting it here in the poem as a perspectiveless fact, like the 'winning' in Updike's poem, unsettles our thinking. In these lines, Bishop first describes the oxygen as "terrible" and then the gills as "frightening" because they can "cut so badly". It might seem that the perspective is shifted, starting from the fish before moving back to the speaker. The power of the poem, however, partly lies in the fact that Bishop can call the oxygen terrible whilst the speaker stays human. The speaker, for a moment, experiences the oxygen as terrible in a flash of feeling fish-like. The effect on the reader is that we see the fish gasping for respirable oxygen. We do not need a shift in perspectives to read all the adjectives in the right way; we only need to imagine what they entail in minute detail.

Bishop lets our thinking shift slightly by referring to "terrible oxygen". This does not really stretch our imagination because we know that the fish is suffocating and familiar with the feeling of being out of breath. The commingling word "terrible" describes the fish's *Umwelt*, but this is not to be understood as a closed-off world. In this way, it is not only the fish and the environment that commingle: the word "terrible" also underscores his intertwinement with humans.

3.4 Rhythm and metaphor: Growth

RHYTHMIC GROWTH

Let me get back to Eileen John's remark that poems are not merely thoughts. She concludes her article with stating that a poem is somehow intimately related to thought, but that it "cannot simply become thought; it will often offer more than can be thought" ("Poetry and Directions" 468). To explain what happens when reading a poem, John uses Samuel Taylor Coleridge's image of growth. Coleridge refers to poems as organic wholes, growing like plants (qtd. in "Poetry and Directions" 465). John's comments on liminality in relation to this image are telling, because they hint at a merging of nature and text, especially when she argues that it is difficult to distinguish metaphor from literal language ("Poetry and Directions" 460). Understanding poems as plants (evident in Coleridge and echoed by John's descriptions) fits into a wider image of poetry as biology, a theme to which I return in section 4.3.2.

John's biological explanation of poetry makes us see how poetry appeals to us not only as a thought script, offering thoughts that we can entertain as our own, but also because it invites us to participate in a process that resembles life. She reflects on what happens when she reads Bishop's famous line "[i]t is like what we imagine knowledge to be" from "At the Fishhouses": "I feel that I can think it, am thinking it, but I am not sure how or why I got there" ("Poetry and Directions" 467).[49] John describes the feeling of growth that took hold of her after reading the poem as "the sense that my resources have been used, even if I have not controlled how they have been used". John uses the experience of Bishop's poem as an example of what she calls a "derailment of thought". She suggests that this is caused partly by experiencing *feeling* rather than *thinking* in a poem and partly by a sensation of surrender effected by "metaphor or

other means" (468, 463, 464). Indeed, metaphor is a central tool in poetry. In zoopoetry it plays a specific role in the derailment of thought, showing that our imagination is not restricted to the resources of our own minds (as Nagel thought). I address metaphor in the next section on 'growth'; in this section I examine the effect of rhythm.

Parallel to John's line of thought, we could call rhythm – the cadence of sound – a "derailment of feeling". We can undergo this derailment by reading "Other People's Dog" by Joke van Leeuwen:

Other People's Dog

I did not walk the dog,
the dog instead walked me.
Look, he said, look, this is what you do:
you sniff a bit, you then crawl
under bushes, you do there what you
need to do. You wag your tail –
no you're not able to – go after
what has wings, you roll over to your
one side, your other side, your one side,
your mouth lets through the wind, you search
in words for scent, at borders
for strange wet, hear loud shouting
of crowds of humans as if they bay,
pick up only your name
and Lie and Down and Stay. (18)[50]

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49 With the line from "At the Fishhouses" "It is like what we imagine knowledge to be", the poem shifts from the sensory experience of tasting and feeling the seawater surrounding the fishhouses to the abstract theme of knowledge. The sensory atmosphere of the beginning of the poem is continued in the characterisation of knowledge. Apparently, we imagine knowledge to be:

dark, salt, clear, moving, utterly free,
drawn from the cold hard mouth
of the world, derived from the rocky breasts
forever, flowing and drawn, and since
our knowledge is historical, flowing, and flown (66, ll. 79-83).

See for an evaluation of this line: John ("Poetry and Directions" 466). John also refers to Stevenson's discussion of Bishop's geographical poems, that they "begin in a low-keyed deictic mood, pointing at this and that. They go on so long, pointing and looking so intently that, by the end, some more abstract impression has to be felt" (111).

Most lines of the poem are written in iambic tetrameter, which is an apt rhythm for a stroll because the iamb bounce keeps pace with our heartbeats. Yet after the first two lines the metre breaks up through a dactyl when the dog takes the lead ("Look, he said, look"), before returning to iambic tetrameter. The metrical foot is loosened in lines 4 and 5 ("you sniff a bit, you then crawl/ under bushes"). As a result of this, the rhythm of the iambic metre loses its lulling effect. When reading the poem out loud, one notices that sentences falter. This gives the rhythm a certain abruptness, which conceivably mirrors a dog's way of walking whilst sniffing and raising its nose to the air. Hence, the poem starts off with a human perspective on a stroll, written in a regular tetrameter, before being interrupted by the dog with a firm dactyl that is followed by a doglike iambic metre, which almost runs over the lines and is written from the dog's perspective.

The title of the poem is reflected in the first lines: "I did not walk the dog / the dog instead walked me". The dog knows that the speaker is inexperienced in walking dogs. Van Leeuwen does not hesitate to shift perspectives immediately and lets the dog not only teach the walker to walk a dog, but also to walk *like* a dog. In addition to the irregularities in the metre, which mimic the dog's walk, Van Leeuwen uses repetition ("you roll over to your / one side, your other side, your one side") to evoke the dog's rolling over. The enjambment after "your" mimics the moment before toppling over to "your one side". Thanks to the repetition we can easily envision the dog's rolling over to his one side, his other side, and back again. Still, we do more than envision the dog's rolling when we read the line. More than just seeing an image, the repetition invokes in the reader a feeling of rolling over. In a manner reminiscent of John's derailment of thought, we might rightfully ask to whom this feeling belongs. The rhythm literally resituates us, such that we might again have cause to wonder

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50 Ik ging niet wandelen met de hond,
de hond ging wandelen met mij.
Kijk, zei hij, kijk, zo doe je dat:
je snuffelt wat, je kruipt eens
onder groen, je doet daar wat je
daar moet doen, je kwispelt -
nee dat kun je niet - loopt achterna
wat vleugels heeft, je rolt je op je
ene zij, je andere zij, je ene zij,
je mond staat op de tocht, je zoekt
in woorden naar een geur, bij grenzen
naar vreemd vocht, hoort woest geroep
van groepen mens als blaffen aan,
verstaat alleen je naam
en Lig en Koest en Af. (18, ll. 1-15)

"how did I get here?" We might even experience a physical feeling of movement and being moved, but are unsure whether we can call this feeling our own. Were I asked to reflect on the line, I would not probably describe what happens using words, but mimic the dog's movements. With John's remarks in mind, I would be inclined to say that my rhythmic resources have been used, even if I have not controlled how they have been used.[51] Here, I use the idea of growth to indicate that my rhythmic participation in a dog's movement extends my (bodily) imagination: before reading the poem I had not had the experience of rolling over like a dog, but now I have. This makes the question to whom the rolling movement actually belongs more intricate but also redundant: it is a shared movement without a specific owner.

Reflecting on the intimate connection between body and rhythm, the literary theorist Jonathan Culler writes that rhythm "gives lyric a somatic quality that novels and other extended forms lack" (138). Here I am less interested in the fact that novels lack this quality than in this somatic quality's effect. Indeed, rhythm's bodily dimension brings us to realise that poetry is much less about interpretation and seeking for wordily meaning. For Culler, rhythm steers us away from questions pertaining to content, such as "what the poem is about", and draws us into the experience of the poem (165).

Some metres, Culler shows, are especially suited to diverting attention from the question "Who is speaking?" – a standard question often posed when beginning to reflect on a poem. Four-stress metres as in a sentence such as "Jack and Jill went up the hill", for instance, do not cause us to wonder about the identity of the speaker telling us about Jack and Jill's whereabouts, because the rhythm 'feels' descriptive. A four-stressed metre is therefore apt to present nonhuman others descriptively, as in the first line of William Blake's "The Tyger": "Tyger Tyger burning bright / in the forests of the night" (lines 1,2). Again, when reading these lines, it is not likely that the first question to come to our minds will concern the speaker's identity, and this, according to Culler, is especially due to the rhythm. In contrast, a five-stressed metre, like iambic pentameter, does lead us to wonder about who is speaking. This is because iambic pentameter

51 It is important that I address a potential sceptical counter my ponderings here, which would suggest that my participation in a feeling of rolling back and forth should be regarded as fake participation, since humans simply are not dogs. I would respond by pointing out that Elisabetta Palagi and her collaborators have discovered that for my mirror neurons to fire it is far more important that you and I share an emotional affinity than belong to the same species. Palagi and her team tested this hypothesis by researching why and when yawns are contagious. Palagi's research queries the necessity of species membership or even being alike for mirror neurons to function (Palagi). In their research after contagious yawning in dogs Romero et al. found that dogs are more prone to 'catch' their owner's yawn than they are from strangers (Romero).

enacts a rhythm that stays close to the tempo and intonation of a human voice, according to Culler.[52]

We might recognise this transition from a human to a nonhuman voice in the first lines in Van Leeuwen's "Other People's Dog". As I wrote earlier, these lines are written from a human perspective in iambic metre, which is then interrupted by a dactyl upon which the dog's perspective takes over ("Look, he said"). In line with Culler's theory, this shift in rhythm is not a coincidence, for it creates room for the other-than-human voice. In lines 12 and 13 Van Leeuwen also uses vocal effects to elude the human voice. In the translation, the rhythmic assonance of the diphthong "ou" (which in the original is the digraph 'oe') mimics the sound of baying but merges with that of humans having an argument. These lines also contain a break in the iambic metre. It is an example of what Van Leeuwen achieves in this poem: the reader hears humans bay/argue from a dog's perspective.

Moving like a dog and hearing what a dog hears when humans argue, are, I think, outcomes of what Culler calls the paradox of lyric: "the more a poem foregrounds vocal effects, ... the more powerful the image of voicing, oral articulation, but the less we find ourselves dealing with the voice of a person" (176). Culler formulates the paradox of lyric poetry in general terms. For zoopoetry in particular, though, the paradox has considerable explanatory power. Consider, for instance, the zoopoems written by Les Murray in *Translations from the Natural World*, in which animals have a voice (as we saw in "Pigs" in chapter 2 of this study). These poems are not written in iambic metre. In most of them, the stress lies instead on the first syllable of each line, which draws us away from the lulling effect of the familiar iamb, which resembles a human voice.[53]

The same phenomenon – let us call it 'rhythmic growth' – can be recognised in Ted Hughes' zoopoems. Michael Malay addresses this carefully, explaining how in Hughes' zoopoems rhythm relates us to other-than-human energies:

> One way the poems do this ... is through rhythm: the poems *tune* themselves to nature's sounds – the drumming of the rain, or the hunched-up running of the jaguar – through their intricate manipulations of cadence. Doing so, they may be said to load language with more-than-human energies thus

52 Culler does not address differences in languages; does the iamb specifically pairs with Germanic languages in which the verb comes second?

53 It is also worth noting that Murray's poems in iambic metre are often written from a first-person perspective. See, for instance, "Migratory", "Spermaceti", "Puss", and "Echidna" from *Translations from the Natural World*. In these poems, the iambs draw us into an individual person's voice, even though the persons in question are not human.

> bypassing modes of thought that would hold animal life at a conceptual distance. (103)

Following up on Elisabeth Costello's praise of Hughes' "The Jaguar", especially the way it steers clear from any conceptual appropriation, Malay discusses "The Jaguar" and another of Hughes' poems, "Second Glance at a Jaguar", in detail. In Malay's view, "The Jaguar" is still written from within a human framework, but "Second Glance at a Jaguar" overcomes the problem of anthropomorphism entirely in that the poem attunes itself to nature's sounds (103). By contrast, in "The Jaguar"

> Hughes's speaker comes to the zoo with a longing for authentic contact, and, disappointed by the yawning ape and the sleeping tiger he sees earlier in the poem, fastens onto the jaguar as an example of uninhibited life. This determined search for wildness, however, reveals more about Hughes's speaker (his boredom, and his need to transcend it) than it does about the jaguar itself. (Malay 124)

And further on Malay even states that the poem "taps into the speaker's own desire for freedom" (126). With the speaker's projections coming into play, the jaguar himself is now two steps away from the poem's attention. In seeking to establish the cause of this projective identification, Malay points to the images in the poem that have more to do with modern society than a jaguar, of which the final image of the jaguar being a visionary is the most anthropomorphic. He also highlights how the speaker sets off in search of uninhibited life in a (man-made) zoo. Malay implicitly refers to the effect of rhythm when he judges "Second Glance at a Jaguar" to be a more apposite example of an encounter with an unappropriated wild anymal. Indeed, he says that in this poem Hughes "allows the animal to shape the cadences of language" and discusses the assonances and repetitions of word and sound in the stanzas that enable this.

In my view, it is less the all-too-human images than the rhythm that sets off our anthropomorphism alarm when reading "The Jaguar". "Second Glance at a Jaguar" is more attuned to the anymal itself not because it contains less human imagery. Indeed, in this poem Hughes uses "gangster", "club tail", "black jack tail" – images that are every bit as anthropomorphic as that of the visionary in "The Jaguar". Instead, anthropomorphism comes to the fore in "The Jaguar" because it is written in a rough iambic metre, whereas "Second Glance at a Jaguar" is not. With Culler's remark about the iamb approximating the human voice in mind, we could account for the feeling that "The Jaguar"

does not overcome a human framework simply by noting that rhythm leaves too little space for nonhuman energies.

Growth, here, means that through the poems the reader becomes able to walk "flank to flank" with the anymal, as Costello/Coetzee phrases it (114). The poem's rhythm somehow expands my bodily imagination. In my view, walking with the anymal shows that anthropomorphism depends, at least in part, on questionable presuppositions. This also becomes apparent in Malay's discussion. After his impressive treatment of the jaguar poems, in which he considers the possibility that poetry might "load language with more-than-human energies", Malay suddenly falls back into the binaries of anymal versus human, body versus mind, and rhythm versus language:

> Of course, as with any poem about any animal, Hughes cannot escape the prism of language. The jaguar is necessarily described within an all-too-human framework and thus tangled up with human concerns and projections. (127)

Apparently, "loading language with more than human energies" was only meant for bodily energies. The jaguar is set at a distance again. This is not because of his 'otherness', as Malay suggests a few sentences earlier, but because of Malay's erroneous idea that rhythm only induces bodily engagement, whereas 'meaning' and a 'cognitive engagement' with the jaguar stay out of reach. Here again, Haugeland's remark about the pervasiveness of Cartesian dualism pertains ("Mind" 233). A poem that makes room for more than only human energies would have to make room for anymals as body subjects, questioning the simple anthropomorphic/zoomorphic distinction. Perhaps Hughes' own reflection on zoopoetry gives us the words with which these binaries can be overcome:

> How can a poem ... be like an animal? Well, perhaps it cannot look like a giraffe or an emu or an octopus ... It is better to call it an assembly of living parts moved by a single spirit. The living parts are the words, the images, the rhythms. The spirit is the life which inhabits them when they all work together. ... So, as a poet, you have to make sure that all those parts over which you have control, the words and rhythms and images, are alive. (*Handbook* 17)

Creating life in a poem involves fine-tuning all of its aspects: rhythm, rhyme, and images. It is this extended metaphor of a poem as an anymal, much like Coleridge's image of poems as plants used by John, that shows why poetry and

nonhuman others have such a close relationship on a deep level. Zoopoetry necessarily treats anymals as body subjects; if that were otherwise, neither the zoopoem nor the anymal who inhabits it would come alive. In chapter 4, I explore how metaphor, as used by Hughes here, is more than 'just' a poetic tool.

METAPHORIC GROWTH: METAPHORS VERSUS MATCHING

3.4.1 Introduction

Metaphors are preeminent poetic tools. One of the first tropes for which we would probably reach in characterising poetry is metaphor. In zoopoems they play an even more important role, because they convey a feeling of growth, as does rhythm. They swiftly lead us to see what we have not seen before. Moreover, in this section I argue that they can even give us an inkling of what it is like for someone to be that someone – even when the someone in question belongs to another species.

In this way, the tool of metaphor taps directly into the empathy debate, which brings us back to the distinctions and presuppositions discussed in chapter 1. In that chapter I distinguished between three presuppositions that beset existing thought on anymal minds. As a zoopoetical tool, metaphor refutes the third of these tenets, which holds that the gap between encapsulated selves can "only [be] credibly crossed when the other selves in question are similar to me". This assumption is quite common and generally accepted. How often do we use the phrase "you don't know something unless you have experienced it yourself" to mark the limits of our imagination in everyday situations? This presupposition is not relegated to everyday life; the educated view also assumes that empathy is impossible without significant similarities between the empathiser and the target of their empathy. So much is clear in Amy Coplan's remark that "the more unlike the target we are, the more difficult it is to reconstruct her subjective experiences" ("Understanding" 13) and Thomas Nagel's assumption that one needs to be "sufficiently similar … to adopt his point of view" (442).

In this section I question the extent to which similarity is a prerequisite for empathy not by engaging with the empathy debate, but by turning to the process of metaphor instead. Even though metaphor and empathy may not seem an obvious pair, I argue that in fact metaphorical and empathetic processes are much alike. They resemble one another, most notably, in that they instigate changes of perspective and face some of the same pitfalls. To develop this line of thought, I use Gerard Steen's exploration of perspective change as a core

feature of metaphors. Furthermore, I discuss Marco Caracciolo's specific class of what he calls "phenomenological metaphors", which he suggests not only bring about a change in perspective but even capture the "what it is like" for someone to be that someone. In this way, a phenomenological metaphor can establish empathy – even if the target of one's empathy does not resemble me ("Phenomenological Metaphors" 73).

As I have said, it is often assumed that the possibility of empathy and one's perspective being changed relies on similarities between the object and source. Looking beyond the empathy debate, however, the metaphor debate calls into question whether such similarities really are a precondition in this respect. What is at stake in this discussion is whether metaphors either reveal or create similarities. I argue that we need to ask the same question in empathy studies: the question, that is, of whether we create similarities when we empathise rather than assuming that our empathy is based on pre-existing resemblances.

The structure of this section is as follows. Firstly, I discuss a metaphor in Bishop's poem "Sandpiper". Secondly, I show how this metaphor induces a change of perspective and in that way bears similarities to the process of empathy. I then show, via a different route, how metaphorical and empathetic processes are similar with regard to the pitfalls they encounter, specifically concerning 'projection' and 'selfishness'. Thirdly, I turn to the work of Gerard Steen and Marco Caracciolo and discuss a metaphor in Les Murray's poem "Yard Horse" in light of their claim that the process of metaphor has the same effect as the process of empathy. Describing empathy as a metaphorical process prepares us for the second part of this section, which critically discusses the idea that the empathiser and target of their empathy need to match.

By discussing these poems, I further explore the extent to which metaphors other than phenomenological metaphors can capture the "what it is like" for someone to be that someone. The underlying question here is whether the "what it is like" – in other words, 'raw feeling' or 'subjective experience' – is private and ineffable, as the preposition described above suggests. Furthermore, through a discussion of metaphors and similes in Les Murray's "Yard Horse" I gauge how we might change our perspective without being similar.

In metaphor studies there are roughly two ways of understanding the working of metaphor. One is proposed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, who understand metaphor as an omnipresent tool in our language and culture. It can ultimately be traced back, they suggest, to the way in which we experience our bodies. These factors determine the "metaphors we live by" (to quote Lakoff and Johnson's title). Such a view of metaphor can be paired with the idea that similarity is a prerequisite for empathy. On this view, metaphors are pregiven by culture whereas similarities are inherent in nature (what is more, if we

do not bear any similarity to the target of our empathy, then empathy has no chance). The other understanding of metaphor is that metaphors do not reveal what is already given, but extend our categories and shape new meanings and feelings. This view on metaphor comes close to Elizabeth Costello's conviction that there are no bounds to the sympathetic imagination, which reflects the theme of growth. Metaphors in zoopoetry are best evaluated through this second grasp of metaphor. Ultimately, I think that we do not empathise because of given similarities (whether they be present in nature or agreed upon in culture); instead, we create similarities because we empathise.

3.4.2 Looking through the eyes of Bishop's sandpiper

Before I discuss these two views on metaphor in more depth, in this section I show how metaphor can induce a perspective shift in a manner comparable to the process of empathy. A metaphor in Elizabeth Bishop's poem "Sandpiper" illustrates such a perspective shift. Yet, as I will describe shortly, Bishop is herself cautious about using metaphors. This hesitation, which we can sense in "Sandpiper", concerns the pitfall of projection and not keeping a respectful distance from the anymal.

In her poems, Bishop often refers to anymals as creatures whose experiential lives are inaccessible to humans. Their 'otherworldliness' inhibits our attempts to enter their minds.[54] In her poem "Sandpiper", however, there is a perspective shift. This occurs in the first four stanzas, as we are looking at the sandpiper, and then the final line, which we suddenly see through the sandpiper's eyes. To achieve this effect, Bishop uses a metaphor in the first stanza, in which she characterises the sandpiper as "a student of Blake". As I will show shortly, this metaphor gives rise to a set of questions and reflections.

Sandpiper

The roaring alongside he takes for granted,
and that every so often the world is bound to shake.
He runs, he runs to the south, finical, awkward,
in a state of controlled panic, a student of Blake.
(131, ll. 1-4)

54 For a discussion of the adjective "otherworldly" in Bishop's poetry, see Vendler.

With this metaphor, Bishop playfully alludes to the Romantic poet William Blake's poem "Auguries of Innocence", which begins with the line that has made the poem famous: "To see a world in a grain of sand" (line 1). This line could be read as an instruction to the reader, making "Auguries of Innocence" an example of didactic poetry.[55] Although humans do not usually see worlds in grains of sand, the poet suggests that they should make an effort to do so. To better grasp the meaning of this first line, we need to read the following lines in which Blake urges humans to understand that "small cruelties" eventually cause "big disasters":

> A robin redbreast in a cage
> puts all heaven in a rage
> a dove house fill'd with doves & pigeons
> shudders hell thr' all its regions
> A dog starv'd at his master's gate
> predicts the ruin of the State
> (ll. 5-10)

Small cruelties befall a series of home-and-garden anymals – a robin, doves and pigeons, and a dog. They suffer, but their suffering is not the subject of the poem. Blake's real focus lies on what these small cruelties predict, namely 'big', unfortunate events that involve humans. It is this discrepancy between the target of cruelty and its moral source that makes Bishop reluctant to use metaphors.

Bishop is uneasy about didacticism or moralism in poetry (*One Art* 596; *Poems* 861).[56] Moreover, she had reservations about the Romantics, for their sentimentality obstructed an impersonal view of nature (*Poems* 685, 686). If we take her discomfort with didacticism and reservations about the Romantics together with her hesitation about metaphors as a poetic trope, it is tempting to read Bishop's metaphor in "Sandpiper" as a way of jokingly putting Blake in his place. It is as if she is saying to Blake: "Here is your apt pupil! Seeing a world in a grain of sand means that you cast your eyes on the soil of the earth, not on a sentimental, apocalyptic picture of a state's ruin". However, reading the ref-

55 Cf. Grant.

56 As I wrote in my bachelor thesis, *Turning the Light-Switch Off*, Bishop suggests that to improve poetry one should "cut the morals off – or out" (*One Art* 596). She dislikes Auden's preachy tone (729) and didacticism in general, especially coming from Christians (*Poems* 861). She is very curious to hear what Lowell means when he calls her "moral" (*Words in Air* 82), probably because she fears that she has fallen into the trap of writing moralistically herself.

erence to Blake as nothing more than a joke would fail to take the metaphor's other achievements into account.

A first achievement is that the metaphor triggers many questions. It compels us to think again about what Blake's lines might mean and subsequently about Bishop's intention in using the image. In Bishop's metaphor, the sandpiper is a true student of Blake. He is not used as a sign or image of the abstract concept of 'innocence'. Of course, the word 'innocence' means, in addition to being without sin, not knowing or even naivety. It is exactly the presumption that anymals are innocent that Bishop's metaphor calls into question. Her sandpiper can actually do something that humans, perhaps, can only do with great difficulty: see a grain of sand without looking for a deeper meaning. Hence, the image of the sandpiper as a student of Blake confronts us with the following, related questions: What does Blake mean when he writes about seeing a world in a grain of sand? What world would we humans see? Would we immediately symbolise it into something more meaningful for us or can we see the grain of sand as a whole world in itself? Humans might struggle with the latter task, because we can hardly focus our attention on something so small and – in our eyes – so meaningless. When the grain of sand comes to our attention, we notice that we have been defeated by a sandpiper.

As a second achievement, and on a more abstract level, Bishop's metaphor lets us rethink how we experience metaphors. It is difficult to read Blake's line "to see a world in a grain of sand" in a non-metaphorical way, since we, as human readers, are trained to read poetry figuratively. Knowing this, Bishop uses the metaphor to question the very nature of metaphor. By calling the sandpiper a student of Blake, she invites us to direct our attention to the real world. Hence, this metaphorical process runs in the very opposite direction to that which Blake had in mind and indeed to that of metaphorical processes in general. According to the most basic explanation of metaphor, when we read or hear a metaphor we would normally look for abstract, shared characteristics between the target and the source. [57] When we process the phrase "you are a flower", for instance, we immediately search for abstract characteristics that both the flower and you share so as to make sense of the metaphor ('beautiful' and 'tender', for example). Bishop, however, does not use this metaphor in this way. By calling the sandpiper a student of Blake, she inverts Blake's image of someone trying to see a world in a grain of sand, such that the grain of sand is seen *as* an actual world in itself. Indeed, this forms the world of a sandpiper. To Bishop's sandpiper, these grains are the world and Bishop urges the reader to

57 An exception to this rule is the class of image metaphors, on which see Deignan.

envision real grains of sand from his perspective. It is not only the metaphor that causes this shift in perspective; the hesitation in line 9 "– Watching, rather, the spaces of sand between them" also contributes to the effect:

> The beach hisses like fat. On his left, a sheet
> of interrupting water comes and goes
> and glazes over his dark and brittle feet.
> He runs, he runs straight through it, watching his toes.
>
> - Watching, rather, the spaces of sand between them,
> where (no detail too small) the Atlantic drains
> rapidly backwards and downwards. As he runs,
> he stares at the dragging grains.
>
> The world is a mist. And then the world is
> minute and vast and clear. The tide
> is higher or lower. He couldn't tell you which.
> His beak is focussed; he is preoccupied,
>
> looking for something, something, something.
> Poor bird, he is obsessed!
> The millions of grains are black, white, tan, and gray,
> mixed with quartz grains, rose and amethyst.
> (131, ll. 5-16)

Rather than directing us towards an abstraction, Bishop draws us into a concrete world, even more concrete than that which we usually allow ourselves to see. This is why the final lines can be read as descriptions of what the sandpiper sees or, rather, its translation into human language: "The millions of grains are black, white, tan, and gray / mixed with quartz grains, rose and amethyst". This final line shows that we have taken the opposite direction to that of Blake's "heaven's rage" and "ruin of the state". Bishop alerts us to the hazards of using metaphors which highlight the target at the expense of the source. With the help of a meta-metaphor Bishop takes the first step towards a perspective change and by the final stanza we are – as far as we can be – in the sandpiper's world.

On first reading, we would probably doubt whether Bishop's metaphor can perform such a shift. The processes of perspective shift, empathy, and metaphor, however, bear many resemblances. The relationship between metaphors and perspective shift lies at the core of the research of Gerard Steen and

Marco Caracciolo, who study the role of metaphors in founding fully fledged empathy. Before I turn to especially Caracciolo's work, however, I would like to dwell on the idea that the process of metaphor is comparable with that of empathy. Another way of demonstrating their resemblances, besides indicating what one metaphor can accomplish, is to pay attention to how both of these processes can be hindered. As Bishop has already shown, the source of a given metaphor (in Blake's case the anymals) is at risk of being lost from sight. In terms of empathy we face the pitfall of what Coplan has termed "self-oriented perspective taking", by which she means our learned way of trying to connect to others ("Understanding" 9). This boils down to me imagining *myself* in your situation as opposed to "other-oriented perspective taking", which entails me imagining *you* in your situation ("Understanding" 10). Coming from different routes, both poets and theorists recognise this problem, which I address in the following paragraph.

3.4.3 Two poets' hesitations about anymal metaphors

From Bishop's metaphor in "Sandpiper", we learn that we tend to lose sight of the concrete world and risk losing the source domain. This, Bishop explains, is precisely why metaphors are scarce in her poetry. To make her point clear Bishop approvingly cites Edgar Allan Poe, who, in reflecting on his work "The Raven", explains that he uses metaphor only sparingly because they "dispose the mind to seek a moral in all that has been previously narrated" (qtd. in *Poems* 683). This is especially so when anymals are the source domain. Indeed, Bishop is very reluctant to use them in "false analogies" (685):

> It was perhaps consoling and popular to think that the animals were just like the citizenry, but how untrue, and one feels … how selfish. There are morals a'plenty in animal life, but they have to be studied out by devotedly and minutely observing the animal, not by regarding the deer as a man imprisoned in a "leathern coat" (*Poems* 686).

The concern exhibited by Bishop's sharp wording has to do with the loss of the source, which is in most cases the anymal. This quotation is lifted from her literary statement titled "As We Like It" – a reference to Shakespeare's play, in which the character Jaques suggests that lords should actually wear the horns and skin of a killed deer. In her statement, the jargon of the empathy debate and that of metaphor studies intermingle. In the context of anymals, Bishop does not hesitate to call a metaphor or simile 'selfish'.

Bishop's observation can be substantiated by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's work on metaphor. In their seminal work *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson state that the process of metaphor necessarily hides some aspects of the source in order to foreground the target (10). So, when I say: "You are a flower", the target is "you" and aspects of the flower that do not serve to envision "you" are necessarily obscured. Lakoff and Johnson present this as a given. The target domain – as they call it – is highlighted at the expense of aspects of the source. In their aim to show that metaphors have power even beyond the margins of a text, Lakoff and Johnson stress that metaphors are not solely to be seen as a poetical trope but are fundamental to our thinking (3). They discuss examples of metaphors that we use on a daily basis. "ARGUMENT is WAR" and "TIME is MONEY" are the most famous of these examples, because they show that our thinking is thoroughly metaphorical: we *spend* time or *win* an argument without even considering these phrases metaphors (4).

The idea that metaphors are taken for granted applies equally to poetry. In their study of poetic metaphor George Lakoff and Mark Turner explain that poets use metaphors in broadly the same way as people normally do, in that poets themselves lean on metaphors that have been culturally passed on and use them almost subconsciously:

> there exist basic conceptual metaphors for understanding life and death that are part of our culture and that we routinely use to make sense of the poetry of our culture. We might have used any of these poems as an introduction to these basic metaphors. We chose the Dickinson poem ["Afraid? Of Whom Am I Afraid?"] not to point out what is unusual about it but rather to introduce the range of common, unconscious, automatic basic metaphors which are part of our cultural knowledge and which allow us to communicate with each other, whether in ordinary conversation or in poetry. (15)

In relation to anymals, Lakoff and Turner argue that Western culture conveys the paradigm of "The Great Chain of Being", according to which humans are endowed with "higher-order attributes and behavior (e.g. thought, character)" whereas anymals are attributed "instinctual attributes and behavior" (170). In Lakoff and Turner's view, poets do not break with 'barring convictions' in an Uexküllian sense but simply reiterate them in their poetry. The presence of these pre-given metaphors, which are used subconsciously and automatically, raises the question of whether we can understand poetry in a way that does break with existing convictions. Or is it that we can only understand images

in terms of our culture, as Lakoff and Turner argue? With these questions in mind, I discuss this issue by means of a metaphor in a poem by Les Murray. Contrary to Lakoff and Turner's view, poets such as Hughes, Bishop, Herzberg, or any of the other poets whom I discuss in this study are wary of using culturally reproduced metaphors. This is precisely because of the way that they restate and ingrain the convictions that set us at a distance from anymals.[58] In her poem "Starfish", the Dutch poet Judith Herzberg puts forward her objections to the use of metaphors:

Starfish

Always assumed it must be whales
because they're so big and bare in the water
so scaleless and from the inside extensively
stringed, for whom it would be the worst.
These brainwaves, what they feel, sense and suspect,
that it must be whales for whom it would be the worst
With their sea-wide radar
the whales, seals and dolphins
who more than we know understand
make more of vibrations and
the most refined signalling.

But then all these shells and snails
not knowing anything
a snail not noticing it is outgoing tide
whilst it is outgoing tide, is gone and a starfish
attached to the rock but you can't feel yourself
into their being actually yes,
like the fingers of children around the handles
of heavy, valuable bags how they, without any notice,
relocate themselves, you can feel your way into everything
but it makes you complicit
and whether it's correct can never be checked.

58 Bishop has a preference for similes, which leave both the source and target intact, because something is not understood in terms of something else. That said, she sometimes uses 'image-metaphors', as for instance in "The Fish": "barnacles, / fine rosettes of lime" or "the irises backed and packed / with tarnished tinfoil / seen through the lenses / of old scratched isinglass" (42-43). In these instances of metaphor, the source is more extensively described than the target.

> But feeling your way into an evolved organism
> is less upsetting than this news
> from the north: starfish often die two
> by two, their tips hooked together,
> and then, by the thousands, wash ashore. (this is not
> a metaphor for this is way and way too real
> and way too real for one). The absolute annihilation
> is nothing compared to this if the small nothingness
> serves as nothing but a symbol.[59]

With the lines "this is not / a metaphor it is far and far too real / and far too real for that), Herzberg refers to a newspaper report of starfish washing ashore. We might be tempted to read their washing ashore as a metaphor by the way in

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59 Zeesterren

> Altijd gedacht dat het walvissen waren
> omdat die groot en zo bloot in dat water
> zo schubloos en van binnen uitvoerig
> besnaard, voor wie het het ergste zou zijn.
> Die hersencumuli, wat daarin
> doordacht wordt, voorvoeld en geahnd,
> dat het walvissen waren voor wie het het ergste
> zou zijn met hun zee-brede radar
> de walvissen zeehonden en dolfijnen
> die meer dan wij weten begrijpen
> meer maken van trillingen en
> het verfijndste seinen.
>
> maar dan al die schelpen en slakken
> die nergens van weten
> een slak die niet merkt dat het eb wordt
> terwijl het toch eb wordt is weg en een zeester
> gehecht aan de rots maar daar kan jij je
> niet in verplaatsen jawel
> als de vingers van kinderen om hengsels
> van zware kostbare tassen, hoe die zonder bericht
> zich herschikken, je kunt je overal in verplaatsen
> maar het maakt medeplichtig
> en of het klopt is nooit na te gaan.
>
> Maar het inleven in een ontwikkeld organisme
> maakt minder van streek dan dit nieuws
> uit het noorden: zeesterren sterven vaak twee
> aan twee met punten in elkaar gehaakt,
> en spoelen zo bij duizenden aan. (dit is geen
> metafoor daar is het veel en veel te echt
> en veel te echt voor.) het grote niets
> is daarbij vergeleken niets als aan de kleine
> nietigheid niets is gelegen dan symboliek. ("Zeesterren" 48-49 ll. 1-32)

which they do so in pairs, with the tips of their arms hooked together. We could easily link this to how humans cling to each other in their hour of need. Even more so, the transmission of the cultural heritage of The Great Chain of Being trains us to read the starfish's fate as an image for that of humans.

However, Herzberg rather strongly instructs the reader not to turn the image into a metaphor. By stressing the report's veracity, Herzberg urges the reader to acknowledge that the starfish washing ashore is a fact that stands on its own and has intrinsic value. The source domain, she argues, should be left intact. This can be read in the final lines of the poem: "The absolute annihilation / is nothing compared to this if the small nothingness / serves as nothing but a symbol" (30-32). The terms "big" (absolute) and "small" are mentioned, but in "Starfish" and in Blake's poem the words are evaluated differently. In "Starfish" the metaphorical route is questioned, in a manner that is reminiscent of Bishop's objections. Herzberg disapproves of turning something assumedly "small", like starfish clinging together, into a metaphor or symbol for human misery, even if that misery were the greatest misery imaginable.

Herzberg's warning is indeed comparable with Bishop's reluctance to use metaphors. They both shy away from highlighting the object at the expense of the source. In Herzberg's warning we read the same plea not to shift our attention to something bigger. To her, the starfish are too real to be lost in metaphor. Denying their reality is selfish, in a way. Indeed, according to Bishop this is precisely the problem with metaphors as such; turning anymals into metaphors is a selfish way of focusing on one's own species by way of a detour through others. The only metaphors that both Bishop and Herzberg make use of are those in which the source domain and the target domain are equally prominent.

The same pitfall of selfishness is recognisable in the empathy debate. Amy Coplan sees selfish projection as the main difficulty with the process of empathy. This is also the problem of, "self-oriented perspective taking", whereby we imagine ourselves in others' shoes as opposed to "other-oriented perspective taking", in which we imagine how it is for them in their shoes. Earlier I described how in order to feel empathy, according to Coplan, we must be alike but not be too similar: we must retain a sense of a separate self. I must be alike enough to be able to feel what someone else is *feeling*. However, I must also be different enough to really feel what *someone else* is feeling. For Coplan, some similarity between target and source is indeed a prerequisite for empathy since "the more unlike the target we are, the more difficult it is to reconstruct her subjective experiences" ("Understanding" 13-15, 15, 13). It is by stressing the need for a separate self that Coplan intends to avoid the pitfall of selfish projection.

However, Coplan shifts from an objective towards a more subjective position on similarity, rephrasing this sentence later as "we are more likely to empathize with those we know well and whom we *judge to be* like ourselves in some important respect" ("Understanding" 13; my emphasis). This shift shows that the issue of similarity is far from clear cut in the empathy debate. Although we might presume that it is a prerequisite for empathy, if we follow Coplan's less stringent rephrasing and do not consider similarity as an ontological given then the question arises: under which circumstances do we judge others to be like ourselves? Are such judgements context specific? Are they culturally determined? Metaphors and empathy both circle around the subject of understanding. Accordingly, having discussed Lakoff and Turner's analysis of metaphors I raised the following, related question: can we only understand things in terms of our culture? Before we can decide on this matter, we need to know how metaphor and empathy are related.

3.4.4 Phenomenological metaphors

A direction in which we might find an answer to this question is intimated by Gerard Steen, who puts forward the following understanding of the core of metaphor: "[w]hen a metaphor is used deliberately, it instructs the addressee to momentarily adopt another standpoint, in another frame of reference, and to reconsider the local topic from that point of view" (16). This is what happens in the case of Bishop's sandpiper, because viewing the bird as a student of Blake makes us see the bird anew – as someone who can really see the world in a grain of sand.

Marco Caracciolo goes even further than Steen. In what he terms "phenomenological metaphors", he sees the possibility of not only inducing a perspective shift with regard to a given topic, but even a way of feeling what someone else is feeling from their point of view ("Phenomenological Metaphors" 61). He substantiates his argument by way of examples of such metaphors taken from the novel *Saturday* written by Ian McEwan. In this novel, the narrative is internally focalised by the protagonist Henry Perowne. Caracciolo argues that metaphors and similes have a special role in this novel, in that they convey Perowne's 'raw feelings' to the reader. Consider, for instance, a paragraph in which Henry Perowne's experiences assertions and questions as a "mental shrug" and "interrogative pulse" (qtd. in "Phenomenological Metaphors" 69). These similes induce an experience in the reader of the what it is like to be Henry Perowne. Thanks to the simile, we simulate the "interrogative pulse" of a question.

Caracciolo shows that preverbal consciousness in particular benefits from these metaphors and similes ("Phenomenological Metaphors" 61). As readers, our perspective shifts not only in the sense that we understand *what* Perowne is thinking and feeling; we also simulate *how* Perowne experiences his thoughts and feelings. Phenomenological metaphors, then, are metaphors that let the reader enter into *how* a person experiences the world. Caracciolo claims that this type of metaphor captures the what it is like, as Nagel put it; that we as readers can undergo Perowne's raw feelings in the sense of unmediated, uninterpreted emotions thanks to the metaphors and similes; and, furthermore, that this is what is called empathy. Although this last point may be true, a devil's advocate would still refer to Coplan's concern and point out that it is not at all certain whether we are experiencing Henry Perowne's raw feelings by simulating them. Are we not just too similar?[60]

That said, when we think of the sandpiper as a student of Blake, might we not say that we now have an inkling of the what it is like for the bird to be the bird? Or, in other words, that we now know *how* the bird experiences his world? Thanks to the metaphor, we realise that humans are inclined to value the Romantic image of a world in a grain of sand more than the concrete world of the sandpiper. We may also ask ourselves how it is that we fall short in translating what the bird sees, simply because in our world grains of sand are normally not that important. Still, these realisations do not seem to capture the sandpiper's raw feelings in the way that metaphors and similes in *Saturday* depict Henry Perowne's raw feelings. Additionally, Bishop's metaphor describes the bird from the outside, whereas the phenomenological metaphors capture someone's internal experience. Does this mean, perhaps, that although Bishop's metaphor puts a perspective change in motion, a total perspective change may only be possible when we read and experience phenomenological metaphors? And, finally, in order to simulate raw feeling through a metaphor, do we not just have to be similar? Could it be Bishop hesitates to capture the sandpiper's inner world in a metaphor because she considers humans and sandpipers too different to draw the former into the latter's perspective?[61] If

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60 In his "Reflection" on Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals*, which was included in the book following the Princeton edition from 1999, Peter Singer conducts a fictive (?) dialogue with his fictive (?) daughter. The conversation calls into question the fact that Coetzee/Costello's lectures observe no boundary between characters in novels and persons in real life. Naomi, Singer's daughter, contests Costello's conviction that it is possible for her to imagine herself into the life of a bat because she is able to imagine herself into a fictional character who has not even lived. Naomi's reasoning is that it is far easier to enter a fictional character's life, since a writer can simply make the character look like herself or someone else whom she knows (91). I discuss this refutation in the final chapter.

61 In fact, this would be in line with Bishop's hesitations about focalising the world of an anymal, which she expressed in the essay "As We Like It" (see section 3.5.3.).

we hold on to the need for similarity then the possibility of empathy might face a double bind: either we are too similar and cannot adopt *someone else*'s feelings, or we are too different and cannot capture the what it is like.

3.4.5 Feeling our way into Les Murray's yard horse

Studying the metaphors and similes in Les Murray's poem "Yard Horse" offers a way to break through this impasse. In his volume *Translations from the Natural World*, Murray describes anymals' minds from the inside. In "Yard Horse" the reader experiences the world through the lived body of a horse that is learning to lead his herd.

> Yard Horse
>
> Ripple, pond, liftoff fly. Unlid the outswallowing snorter
> to switch at fly. Ripples over day's gigantic peace.
> No oestrus scent, no haem, no pung of other stallion,
> no frightening unsmell of sexless horses,
> the unbearable pee-submissive ones who are not in instinct.
> Far off blistering grass-sugars. Smoke infinitesimal in air
> and, pond gone, his dense standing now would alert all mares
> for herded flight. Fire crowds up-mountain swift as horses,
> teeters widening down. Pond to granite to derelict
> timber go the fur-textures. Large head over wire
> contains faint absent tastes, sodichlor, chaff, calc.
> The magnified grass is shabby in head-bowed focus, the earth
> it grows from only tepidly exists; blots of shade are abyssal.
> In his mind, fragments of rehearsal: lowered snaking neck
> like goose-speech, to hurry mares; bounced trot-gait of menace
> oncoming, with whipping headshake; poses, then digestion.
> Moment to moment, his coat is a climate of mirrorings
> And his body is the word for every meaning in his universe. (31, ll. 1-18)

Just as we shape our metaphors and similes in accordance with what we experience daily, so does the horse; his use of metaphors reflects his daily experience. The simile "fire crowds up-mountain swift as horses" (line 8), for instance, shows how he evaluates a wildfire; maybe the horse has only seen fire in a fixed place but in this case the fire is on the move and to him behaves like a drove of horses on the run. In lines 14 and 15 we read how the horse rehearses how

he must control his herd: "In his mind, fragments of rehearsal: lowered snaking neck / like goose-speech, to hurry mares". In human language, metaphors or similes having to do with how geese talk to each other would only be used in a degrading way. Geese lower their necks to shoo other geese or intruders away. Wild and some domestic horses lower their necks as well, which is indeed called 'snaking' and has the purpose of managing the herd.

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We can recognise cross-species behaviour in the simile "like goose-speech" (line 15) because it translates the natural world. What Murray achieves in this poem is that he brings us readers to stop taking our experiential world to be the only possible world; think about what it would mean to live near grass, horses, and geese, outside, and with a different form of sight ("blots of shade are abyssal"); and realise that for a horse living on a farm, metaphors derive from one's surroundings. But things do not stop there, as Lakoff and Johnson would insist. For us, this simile and the metaphor open up the yard horse's world and instigate a perspective shift that would be thought impossible were one to focus solely on similarities and dissimilarities. Perhaps we need a common ground for understanding, but it could also be that inhabiting the same earth and "shar[ing] a substrate of life" may be enough (Coetzee 49).

Although Murray translates the way in which the horse sees and experiences the world, we may ask whether this perspective change is complete. Indeed, the poem gives us only the content of the experiences, not *how* the horse experiences that content. The simile of the lowered goose neck, therefore, tells us something about a yard horse's world, but not about his raw feelings.

Could it be that we can only empathise our way into somebody else's feelings if that someone is, as Coplan and Nagel write, similar to us? Is it the case that we can simulate Henry Perowne's raw feelings, since we have similar bodies and therefore know what a shrugged question feels like? In the poem, we learn what the horse sees, hears, and smells, but not *how* the horse experiences these sensations – or do we?

Two metaphors in Murray' poem can help answer the question as to whether we can experience the horse's world – even though our worlds differ. In the final line of "Yard Horse" we read: "and his body is the word for every meaning in his universe". With this line Murray summarises the poem, since all of the former lines contain references to bodily sensations, postures, and mimic the swift rhythm the horse's movement. Although we are trained to separate these bodily sensations from what it means for someone to have these bodily sensations, in this final line Murray tells us that for the horse there is no split between his body and what it is like to have his body. This is also shown in the metaphor "bounced trot-gait of menace oncoming" (lines 15-16). In this metaphor, Murray reaches out to us, human readers, in that the horse's bounced trot-gait must be translated as "I feel a menace oncoming". We read it, subsequently, as a metaphor, because we do not immediately see "trot-gait" and "menace oncoming" as the same thing. To the horse, however, the bounced trot-gait is not a metaphor, since there is no separate target and source domain. The trot-gait is neither something other than the experience nor an outcome of a private subjective feeling; instead it mirrors the "menace oncoming". In fact, there is no outside and inside to this horse, for his body is the language with which he expresses how he feels. His body carries all of the meaning in his universe, coming very close to Uexküll's concept of the *Umwelt*. The horse's *Umwelt* does not consist of behaviours that are the outcome of a hidden mind. On the contrary, it consists of subjective experience, of meaning that is not hidden behind the coat of his body: the horse's every move, smell, and stance carries meaning.

Given that Caracciolo presents phenomenological metaphors as eminent tools for capturing "what it is like for someone to be that someone", we might hesitate before reading Bishop's sandpiper metaphor and the metaphors in "Yard Horse" in the same way. What we can learn from Bishop's and Murray's poems, however, is that what it is like for someone to be that someone is not necessarily a raw feeling in the sense of an inner, mental, private experience. Furthermore, the metaphors used in "Yard Horse" induce us to imagine a horse's world first in a questioning way. (What do the new words mean? What is it that makes us read as if we are moving like the horse?) These metaphors

become more and more detailed until we realise that smells and other bodily sensations are in fact the horse's raw feelings.

Bishop's and Murray's metaphors also show us that we need not be alike to understand the what it is like. This might be best explained by way of a zoopoetical tool that appears at the beginning of Murray's poem: "no frightening unsmell of sexless horses". "Unsmell" is a bit of a neologism. Something can be 'unsmelled' in that no-one has smelled it before or 'odourless', but neither adjective exists as a noun. Humans do not need a noun for this phenomenon, since in a human world smelling is less important than it is in the world of a horse. Again, the word "unsmell" reveals the rapidity with which the poem allows us to enter this horse world, in which smells are more important than language (cf. King and Gurnell 30). Humans are not afraid when they do not pick up a scent (except perhaps when they expect to smell something and are unable to). To horses, however, not smelling other horses might be as upsetting as it would be for humans to meet someone who does not say a word. Translating the world of the horse necessarily entails entering it and opening it up for the reader.

3.4.6 Metaphors and the growth of the imagination

The leading questions for this section have been how we can adopt the perspective of – or even empathise with – a creature that is different from ourselves and how metaphors are involved in these processes. In seeking to formulate an answer to these questions, we must attend critically to the presuppositions that they entail. Costello criticised these presuppositions in a puzzling remark, but her thought gets substantiated by our experience when we read "Yard Horse".

There is one further step to take to finalise my argumentation, given that theorists in metaphor studies and the empathy field have also endorsed Costello's point. In this final step, I point out that we have been questioning the wrong phenomenon. It is not our experience of empathy with or taking the perspective of anymals that are dissimilar to ourselves that we should doubt; rather, we should doubt the extent to which similarity is a prerequisite for empathy. In arguing that similarity should be rejected as a precondition for empathy, metaphor studies offer help again.

In their research on metaphors, Sam Glucksberg and Boaz Keysar underscore their view on similarity by referring to a remark by Goodman and Barsalou: "Just as everything in the world is similar to everything else in the world in some way, so can anything in the world be classified in any number of

ways (qtd. in Glucksberg and Keysar 7). This remark comes close to Dan Zahavi's key argument, which I unpacked in chapter 1.5., that: "After all, everything else resembles everything else in some respect" ("Phenomenology" 36). Framed in relation to the field of metaphor studies this thought means that there are perhaps distinct domains that then are related by way a comparison, like a metaphor. Still, instead of taking these fields *to be* separate from our judgement, we need to realise that we *decide* that they are separate. Glucksberg and Keysar aim to show that metaphors are not to be understood as similes but, on the contrary, that similes are in fact metaphors. In contrast to the conviction that metaphors are best understood as cross-domain mapping (as in Lakoff and Johnson's view), Glucksberg and Keysar propose that metaphors extend categories, in that they connect different domains. Other than in the conception of metaphors as connecting different domains, whereby domains stay the same and we hide and highlight certain aspects of them, in category extension we create new categories when we hear novel metaphors. Glucksberg and Keysar offer the following conclusion:

> When metaphors are expressed as comparisons (i.e., as similes), then they are interpreted as implicit category statements, rather than the other way around. The grouping that is created by the metaphor *induces* the similarity relation, and so the grouping is prior. (16; my emphasis)

Since things are always like other things in indeterminate ways, we might reconsider whether similarities are a prerequisite for feeling empathy. If they are not, Coetzee/Costello may be right to cast doubt on the idea that the right question is whether "we have something in common – reason, self-consciousness, a soul – with other anymals?" (Coetzee 47). If so, the taken-for-granted conception of empathy might be reversed: first we empathise and then subsequently search for similarities as a way of explaining the empathy that we feel.

The idea that we have to have characteristics in common has also been questioned in empathy studies, by the aforementioned Dan Zahavi and Graham McFee, for instance. According to McFee, the idea that "matching feelings" is a prerequisite to empathy is incoherent:

> So my point is not that we lack a clear idea of what represents a total match, nor that there is insufficient matching in some cases, nor that we do not know *if* there is 'matching'. Rather, my objection is to the whole metaphor of matching: since there is no finite totality of features to consider, any detailed idea of matching is rendered incoherent if we try to use it as a kind

> of success condition needed – and its incoherence is inherited by the picture of empathy it sustains. (197)

This picture of empathy suggests that it consists of stages that are hierarchically ranked; from shifting one's perspective to fully fledged empathy. Coplan's assumption (that our feelings have to match and that matching is only possible if we are similar) is the outcome of a fruitless definition of empathy.

Poets such as Bishop and Herzberg may unintentionally critique the concept of matching. In the poem "Starfish", which I have discussed above, Herzberg conducts an interior dialogue by way of a powerful simile that undermines the idea of similarity: "but you can't feel yourself / into their being actually yes, / like the fingers of children around the handles / of heavy, valuable bags how they, without any notice, / relocate themselves, you can feel your way into everything". Next to the line that says we can feel our way into everything, we find a novel metaphor for empathy itself, which relates to the image of children's fingers, that creates a new idea of what empathy might entail. We might tend to think about empathy in the tradition of Coplan: there are two human beings, one of whom recreates the subjective experience of the other through what we might call 'in-her-shoes-perspective taking'. When we follow this route, however, we irretrievably end up in a discussion of how much we ought to be alike to experience the same feeling and how much we must differ to avoid self-oriented perspective taking.

In her poem Herzberg asks us to review this definition of empathy through a simile that brings us to the point of reconsidering our presuppositions. And since Herzberg relates empathy to a thoroughly bodily sensation of fingers relocating themselves, we might ask whether the idea that empathy is just simulation is motivated by the dubious mind-body split. Are mentally adopting a perspective and bodily simulating raw feelings really two distinct forms of empathy? If indeed the grouping is prior, as Glucksberg and Keysar point out, and we can connect two things in ways to which we have never paid attention, then, yes, we might be able to empathise with anyone, with anything. Ted Hughes writes about how metaphors and similes train our imagination:

> It is one of those curious facts that when two things are compared in metaphor or a simile, we see both of them more distinctly than if they were mentioned separately as having nothing to do with each other. A comparison is like a puzzle. When I say, "His hair was like a rough coconut's" – you say to yourself "How can it be?" And this rouses your imagination to supply answers, showing just how hair can be like coconut hair, without the head beneath being an actual coconut. You are forced to look more closely, and

> to think, and make distinctions, and be surprised at what you find – all this adds to the strength and vividness of your final impression. And it all happens in a flash. (*Handbook* 44)

Hughes does not mention empathy in this quotation, focusing instead on how two things can be seen more vividly thanks to a metaphor or simile. The grouping of a coconut with hair does not seem obvious. Still, these two things are similar in so many ways if we decide that they are. If we group anew, then we might see that humans are like insects, fish, and horses, without a phylogenetic hierarchy. In learning that bounced trot-gait is menace oncoming and that fire can crowd up mountains swift as horses, we are training our perception. Through these metaphors we learn about the world of the horse. On the one hand they let us look more closely; on the other they show that Murray assumes the horse figuring in his poetry is a meaning carrier who can create new meaning by grouping things together differently (as the horse himself does when he sees wildfire, perhaps for the first time). The poem seeks to stay close to the horse's experiential world by letting readers suspend their own experiential world. This effect is mostly due to the perspective shift that the metaphors induce.

If we give up the idea of ontological matching and realise that it is up to living creatures to decide to group things, then we must think again about the right conditions under which empathy can flourish. It may be that one of these conditions is not so much being alike, but simply being close together, as also Dan Zahavi points out ("Phenomenology" 37). If empathy is not dependent on matching features up with one another, then Coetzee/Costello is right in her claim that there are "no bounds to the sympathetic imagination" and we do not have to distrust our feeling of growth (Coetzee 48-49).

4

ANYMALS MOVING THROUGH TEXT AND WORLD

4.1 Introduction

Through the use of zoopoetical tools, poets are able to lessen the degree to which their poetry is anthropomorphic. What is more, they can instigate openness, show the anymal as a whole, and allow the reader to grow by sharing in anymal energies and stretching the imagination. Anymals fare well in the realm that zoopoetry creates for them. When we seek to explicate why poetry and anymality are intimately linked, we enter the field of zoopoetics. Rendering this intimate relation in words involves the same probing and weighing as Coetzee and Herzberg have performed in their work; the definition of zoopoetics is not clear cut. In any case, it needs to include an account of how anymals 'debinarise' our thinking, the materiality of zoopoems, and how these themes relate to the presence of anymals. Finally, to my mind, zoopoetics has to evaluate the concept of reality. The poets whom I discuss in this study often suggest that the ultimate goal of their art is that of making images and text as real as possible. This becomes clear in their letters and essays – for instance, those of Bishop (*Poems* 860) and Hughes (*Handbook* 20), as well as in Marianne Moore's aesthetic aim of creating "imaginary gardens with real toads in them" ("Poetry" line 33). This endeavour is specifically significant in zoopoetics, since creating a space in which anymals can be themselves breaks with a tradition of putting them at the service of symbolism. Nevertheless, I will argue that this prevailing opposition in zoopoetics – to wit, anymals "as themselves" versus anymals "at the service of symbolism" – is not very informative when it comes to establishing what these poets mean by striving for reality.

A traditional point of departure in theorisations of zoopoems is Jacques Derrida's influential article "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)". In this text, Derrida coins the term "zoopoetics" to describe Franz Kafka's presentation of anymals in his work. Furthermore, to criticise, question, and explore the limit between man and anymal, he introduces the concept of "limi-

trophy", which refers to the exercise of probing the nature of a limit. Derrida turns to zoopoetry as a way of inquiring into the line between "Man" and "Animal" (as he puts it), because anymality was never forgotten in poetry, as it was in philosophy. I discuss limitrophy in section 4.2.1.

In proposing that we refashion our thinking into poetic thinking, limitrophy offers us a better understanding of the relationship between poetry and anymality. Practising limitrophied thinking is a first step towards understanding this relationship. In addition to limitrophising our thinking, poetry "defamiliarises" us as Victor Shklovsky claims (3), by which he means that a defamiliarising text arrests our perception and prolongs our attention by making familiar things 'unfamiliar'. In section 4.2.2. I take a closer look at the notion of defamiliarisation and its counterpart, refamiliarisation.

Both limitrophy and defamiliarisation help clarify the intimate relationship between anymals and poetry. However, I think that taken together these concepts are ultimately too limited to account for the sensations and emotional tumult that a theory of zoopoetry has to account for. To establish a well-rounded account of zoopoetry, I propose a third component: "neerbraak" or downfallow (my translation of the term) – a concept coined by the poet Frederike Harmsen van Beek. When we experience a downfallow, we forget the presumed boundary between text and world through an emotional stirring, as I explain in 4.3.3.

Limitrophy, defamiliarisation, and downfallow describe an unsettling of thinking, perception, and feeling. Together they prepare us for what I see as pivotal in zoopoetics: the presentation of a heightened reality through an experience of truth understood as 'unconcealment'. This final Heideggerian outcome of the quest to establish the nature of zoopoetics relates to recent findings in the field of biosemiotics, which combines theories of meaning with the natural world. In section 4.3. I explain how, from a biosemiotic perspective, poetry and nature as a whole are intimately linked. This might sound like a relativist approach to truth or, what is worse, a kind of biosophy. It is worth emphasising, then, that here I am neither opting for a post-truth account of zoopoetry, for which poetry is just as factual as science, nor advocating a form of relativism in order to magnify the power of poetry. Instead, I am seeking to tease out how poetry reveals the narrowness of our concepts of truth and reality. Ultimately, I want to make the argument, which I develop more fully in the next chapter, that our ideas of empathy adhere too closely to theoretical schemas.

4.2 Dwelling on the edge of text and world: Limitrophy, defamiliarisation, and downfallow

4.2.1 "...a real cat, truly, believe me": Limitrophy

In "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)", Jacques Derrida writes that, following what he perceived as the disturbing experience of being observed naked by his cat, "thinking perhaps begins here" (397). This form of thinking is aware of alterity, of being that cannot be incorporated into delineated thinking, as philosophy often attempts to do. Limitrophy, by contrast,

> will concern what sprouts or grows at the limit, around the limit, by maintaining the limit, but also what feeds the limit, generates it, raises it, and complicates it. Whatever I will say is designed, certainly not to efface the limit, but to multiply its figures, to complicate, thicken, delinearize, fold, and divide the line precisely by making it increase and multiply. (398)

Derrida sees limitrophy at work in poetry, which he regards as a way of questioning, feeding, and complicating the limit between what he calls "Man" and "Animal". Poems shelter singular cats, dogs, and even insects, who are granted agency and subjective experience. In a theoretical text such anymals are lost from view (this is true of the text I am writing now, despite the fact that it urges us to attend to them). Indeed, in scientific research they are grasped as instances of a species. However, in the arts singular anymals – when delivered from symbolic service – are allowed to just be there. Part of the practice of limitrophy entails exploring and complicating the supposed dividing line between human and anymal; another involves understanding how texts offer non-abbreviated anymals a place to abide. Derrida's shame at his nakedness – and his confusion about this shame – leave his thinking disconcerted. In explain-

ing this, Derrida makes sure that the reader will not fall into the trap of reading all anymals as allegorical stand-ins:

> I must make it clear from the start, the cat I am talking about is a real cat, truly, believe me, a little cat. It isn't the *figure* of a cat. It doesn't silently enter the room as an allegory for all the cats on the earth, the felines that traverse myths and religions, literature and fables. (374)

Although Derrida's cat should not be read as the "figure of a cat", merely writing that "it is a real cat" does not present his reader with a real cat. When reading this passage, we do imagine a tiny cat but cannot yet touch the cat beyond his description of it, not least because the description lacks *haecceity*, or the special *thisness* Luke Fischer writes about (see chapter 1). The opposition that Derrida addresses here, though, is not that of a real cat versus an imagined, textual cat, but rather the contrast between cats in symbolic service versus real cats. It seems to me that Derrida is assuming either that freeing the cat from symbolism means meeting a real cat or that textuality does not necessarily reduce the cat's reality. I think that, Derrida's introduction to zoopoetics, in addition to training us to see heterogeneity in a seemingly homogenous group, serves to sharpen and refine the theoretical opposition of reality versus poetry, text versus that beyond the text, or anymal symbolism versus the anymal as itself. Although it might seem to go without saying, zoopoetic thinking cannot be done without poetry:

> thinking concerning the animal, if there is such a thing, derives from poetry. There you have a hypothesis: it is what philosophy has, essentially, had to deprive itself of. That is the difference between philosophical knowledge and poetic thinking. (Derrida 377)

From Derrida we can learn that thinking concerning the anymal "begins here"; in other words, that it originates in openness, in thinking that has been "limitrophied". Neither philosophy nor any scientific theory can capture individual, real anymals, which are best met in poetry. Still, unsettling our thinking so as to allow us to meet individual anymals is not the only effect of anymals figuring in poetry. Although Derrida describes feeling shame when his cat looks at his nakedness, he does not take up this affect in his further thinking. He could have said that "thinkfeeling" begins here, for it is not only our propensity to think in terms of limits that has been challenged; our "body-mind" has been affected also. It may be that openness in thinking begins when thought

becomes limitrophied. More needs to be done, however, to make room for anymals and explicate the essence of zoopoetry.

4.2.2 Defamiliarisation/refamiliarisation

Sojourning in close proximity to a limit and thereby folding, dividing, and delinearising it, is a typical practice of zoopoetry. When a poem foregrounds an individual anymal, our assumed limit between human and anymal is called into question. Limitrophy comes close to the phenomenon of defamiliarisation, a well-known concept in literary theory that refers to art's ability to make familiar objects strange. However, whereas limitrophy connects text and reader by destabilising *thinking*, defamiliarisation makes readers newly aware of their *perception*.

The effect of foregrounding an aspect of a text, defamiliarisation is not meant to convey a message, but rather shifts the reader's attention to textual effects. This prolongs the time it takes to read a text. In their research into defamiliarisation, David Miall and Don Kuiken use a sentence that refers to a place in a garden called the Dark Walk: "It is a laurel walk, very old, almost gone wild, a lofty midnight tunnel of smooth, sinewy branches". This sentence, Miall and Kuiken explain, does not merely convey something, but draws attention to itself through the alliteration of 'l' and 's' sounds and using "midnight" and "sinewy" in a metaphorical way (391). As a result, the reader feels that her common reading convictions are being challenged. Miall and Kuiken quote Victor Shklovsky, who coined the term "defamiliarisation", through which:

> one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar", to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. (qtd. in Miall and Kuiken 391)

Miall and Kuiken empirically tested Shklovsky's hypothesis and found that indeed "stylistic variations, known as foregrounding, prompt defamiliarization, evoke feelings and prolong reading time" (389). What Miall and Kuiken did not test, however, was the somewhat enigmatic preceding formulation concerning art's ability "to make the stone stony". This formulation encapsulates poets' wish to stay close to sensation in order to bring language to life. In other words, poets make the poetic elephant 'elephanty', the whale 'whaley',

and so forth, and in this research I aim to formulate how. The urge to "recover the sensation of life", as Shklovsky puts it, comes close to the wish that Ted Hughes expresses, namely that his poems live, through the use of words that live. "Words that live, are words that we hear, like "click" or "chuckle", or which we see, like "freckled, or "veined" ... [w]ords which belong directly to one of the five senses" (*Handbook* 17).

Defamiliarisation leads us away from the cerebral process of knowing and toward a prolonged perception. Poetry can renew readers' sight by using sensory language, for instance. According to Miall and Kuiken's findings, a reader can also use feeling to bring the text back into familiar territory once more, a process that they call "refamiliarising". Defamiliarisation and refamiliarisation are guided by affect: "defamiliarisation evokes affect, and affect guides refamiliarising interpretive efforts" (404). To refamiliarise a text is to return its meaning to familiar ground, which is associated with feeling. In this connection, Olivia da Costa Fialho writes that students experienced uncertainty after being defamiliarised, but that they then used this uncertainty to try to reconstruct meaning and felt joy when they finally succeeded (116). Miall, Kuiken, and Da Costa Fialho describe a process in which the reader's eye is caught by some feature of a text, whether alliteration, deviant grammar, or any other aspect that gives us pause. Trained readers know that writers foreground such things for a reason; once they get the clue, they feel joyful and appreciate the text even more. After a moment of uncertainty, Da Costa Fialho writes, readers then "reorganise their mental schemata, refamiliarising to produce a new comprehension of the text" (120).

Miall and Kuiken, and Da Costa Fialho tested foregrounding's effects on readers using excerpts from novels. In novels, both studies conclude, a moment of defamiliarisation is followed by refamiliarisation and this process can be seen as "such reconsideration of the text surrounding foregrounded features [...] guided by the feelings that have been evoked in response to those features" (Miall and Kuiken 395). These feelings might include, for instance, uncertainty concerning an ellipsis (but which is then abated) or annoyance at the difficulty of reading a foregrounded passage (but which is then relieved in the light of a better understanding).

To a certain extent, I think that poetry works the same way; a lot of what readers do when reading a difficult poem is analogous to problem solving. For instance, we see that alliteration serves some kind of purpose and that a volta is used for a pause and to change our view. Yet it seems to me that there are important differences between poetry and novels when it comes to defamiliarisation and refamiliarisation, which need to be considered. In poetry a complete refamiliarisation of the foregrounded aspects of a text may be impossible. Take, for

instance, the diphthong "ou" in Joke van Leeuwen's line "hear loud shouting / of crowds of humans as if they bay", which I have discussed above (18). In the foregrounded reading, the diphthong mimics the baying of dogs; at the same time, in the non-foregrounded reading, it depicts shouting humans. But does this explanation of the line solve a problem and do we now come to a refamiliarising of the text? Partly we do: given the repeated "ou"-sound, we know there is some kind of mimicking in the text that merges human and dog. The bodily effect of the foregrounding stays alive, however, and cannot be fitted in a new context. It is precisely this twofold mode of reading and experience, which neither poses nor solves a problem, that makes the dog doggish and allows us to "walk flank to flank" with the anymal.

4.2.3 Downfallow

Making the stone of stony, Shklovsky suggests, is a key practice of defamiliarisation. Maill and Kuiken's and Da Costa Fialho's studies, however, only tested a truncated translation of this phenomenon, which they call "feeling", understood as the reader's feeling before refamiliarisation begins. Shklovsky, however, hints that in literature words should evoke sensations in such a way that the stone is made stony. In my view, zoopoetics needs to account for the experience of *touching* a cat in language or De Martelaere's paradox, mentioned at the end of chapter 2. We need an additional concept to understand how this experience might come about. I think that readers need to undergo a downfallow (*neerbraak* in Dutch) if they are to truly perceive something in a new light or even for the first time. This concept, coined by the poet Frederike Harmsen van Beek, goes further than limitrophy and defamiliarisation/refamiliarisation in that it not only challenges our thought and perception, but also opens our hearts by stirring our emotions. Harmsen van Beek uses the neologism in the context of an anymal:

> A centipede I saw, in the bathroom, where such an animal is obviously not supposed to be, and, by the grace of God, this is tenderness, a centipede who spreads his already slight weight over all these tiny feet. This, then, is a downfallow. (Considering first and foremost that everyone finds centipedes repulsive).[62] (*Wat Knaagt?* 39)

62 "Een duizendpoot zag ik, in de badkamer, waar zo'n dier natuurlijk niet hoort, en gratie Gods dat is tederheid, zo'n duizendpoot die zijn toch al zo geringe gewicht verspreidt over al die voetjes. Dit nu is een neerbraak.

The phrase "this, then, is a downfallow" hints at a definition, which points to a sensation of one's emotions being stirred: it is a layered feeling of tenderness (felt? seen?) towards something or someone that would normally be considered repulsive. The remark between brackets is crucial, because a downfallow does always challenge our fixed ideas and breaks them down. Here, the tenderness wins out against the expected repulsiveness, with the speaker marvelling at the centipede's minuscule weight, which nonetheless is spread out over all of his tiny feet.[63] Two pages later, Harmsen van Beek gives another explanation of a downfallow, which has less to do with one's emotions being stirred and more to do with words and inscription: "a writing *down* of a thought about something or other from a writer, formulated in such a way that a (pre)conception is *broken down* in the reader" (*Wat Knaagt?* 41).[64] In translating "neerbraak" as 'downfallow', I am trying to capture the decomposition of fixed concepts (as in 'downfall') and hint at the adverb 'braak' with 'fallow'. In Dutch, 'braak liggen' is used to refer to farmers' fields that 'lie fallow' – that is, fields that have been left to restore themselves in anticipation of future sowing. I have sought to make this connection because the imaginative field that opens up when our emotions are stirred by a downfallow lies fallow: unsown ground ready and waiting to welcome the anymal.

In a downfallow, Harmsen van Beek brings reader, text, and writer together in one event: the writer has to write in a way that precipitates the downfallow in the reader, rousing their emotions. Before I explain why I think the translation of the agricultural connotation of "fallow" is important, let me first indicate why the notion of downfallow is necessary if we are to arrive at a complete and convincing zoopoetics. Limitrophy and downfallow are similar in that they both challenge limits in one's thinking, questioning the line between human and anymal (Derrida) or breaking preconceptions (Harmsen van Beek). Yet limitrophy does not involve our whole being, whereas a downfallow does. Defamiliarisation, the second concept discussed above, not only entails a renewed judgement but also includes our feelings. After the movement of defamiliarisation, we can refamiliarise with the object at hand. Although defamiliarisation is part of the process of a downfallow, the latter aims for no solution and enacts no refamiliarisation, by which the object in question would be put in a new context, as Miall and Kuiken would say. Through a downfallow, we stay defamiliarised and alive to the stoniness of the stone, doggishness of the dog, and

63 The word "feet" here is also telling. Harmsen van Beek sees no impediment to using a word that is usually reserved for humans. This aligns with her conviction that there is no sharp dividing line between humans and anymals. For a discussion of this topic, see M. Meijer *Hemelse* 304.

64 "...de *neer*slag van een gedachte over het een of ander van een schrijver, zó geformuleerd dat een (voor) oordeel wordt door*broken* bij de lezer."

disturbing unsmell of the horse. A downfallow causes us to lay barren; it and we become a receptive, empty place. That is why I think that the connotation of 'braak liggen' (lay barren/fallow) should not get lost in translation as it merges with the meaning of the downfall of fixed, delineated concepts. Harmsen van Beek alludes to the state of being empty in order to receive:

> In a real downfallow there has to be hidden as subtly as possible a secret stimulus to the emotions, that makes the reader's heart receptive (*ontvankelijk*) to convictions … other than or even contrary to the own way of thinking. (*Wat Knaagt?* 41)[65]

Being receptive does not only mean being open to convictions other than those to we usually adhere. It also means that we, through our emotions being roused, become receptive to the stoniness of the stone. When our thought, perception, and feelings are unsettled, we enter the heart of the domain of zoopoetics, in which the stoniness of the stone – or rather the whaleyness of the whale – can be accounted for.

65 "… in een echte neerbraak [moet] zich zo kies mogelijk een geheime prikkel tot ontroering verbergen, die 's lezers ontvankelijk maakt voor opvattingen … die afwijken van of zelfs tegengesteld zijn aan zijn eigen manier van denken" (*Wat Knaagt?* 41).

4.3 Zoopoetics and biosemiotics

4.3.1 Zoopoetics and the intricacy of reality

A quest into the heart of zoopoetics can be found in Kári Driscoll and Eva Hoffmann's *What is Zoopoetics?* In Driscoll and Hoffmann's view, zoopoetics is concerned with the question of what it would mean to let anymals "be themselves" (6). Although an important element in an answer to this question is to stress that anymals should not be put to the service of symbolism, Driscoll and Hoffmann stress that more is needed for a complete account of zoopoetics. That said, naïve literalism shorn of symbolism also falls short (Driscoll, "Sticky Temptation" 213). Anymals in poems are still textual, poetic figures even when they do not serve as a symbol, Driscoll and Hoffmann argue, and we cannot meet them in a poem the same way that we meet anymals in real life. Hoffmann and Driscoll summarise their point as follows: "[i]n short, the white whale in Melville's *Moby Dick* is not *just* a metaphor; but he is also not *just* a whale". As they see it, the task of zoopoetical reading is "to explore what lies between these two extremes, the mutual imbrication and entanglement of the material and the semiotic, the body and the text, the animal and the world" (4, 4). Although I agree that it is important to examine these pairs in the study of zoopoetics, I do not think that what lies between these two extremes quite captures the specificity of zoopoetry.

In the section on metaphor in the previous chapter, in which I reflected on the opposition between figurative and literal language, I discussed the rather culturally deterministic conception of metaphor put forward by Lakoff and Johnson. I argued for a more creative understanding of metaphors as a form of category extension, which grants a metaphor the ability to create new meanings and even new beings. An underlying thought was that literal language and metaphors are not opposites, or at least that they often do not stand in

opposition in the way that we think they do. To some extent metaphors become literal, because we necessarily come to live by the metaphors offered to us by our culture. To a larger extent, however, this 'literalisation' of metaphors needs to be explained differently. What is taken to be a metaphor changes over time and consequently what is understood as literal language shifts as well. The common view, that holds it possible to be either *just a metaphor* or *just a whale* forgets that the meaning of metaphors and naïve literalism fluctuate, as a result of which the meaning of the extremes also varies.

To avoid a narrow perspective on reality, cultural critics must identify those instances in which connections drawn between phenomena (what I discuss here in terms of the equal sign) is accepted as fact and those in which it is regarded a metaphor. "Water = H_2O", for example, is accepted as a flat fact, whereas "water = what binds all life" would be regarded as a metaphor. The underlying conviction here is that, although the formula H_2O offers a truncated conception of water (in that it strips water of all the qualities that are perceived through our senses), certain reductive understandings of phenomena bear more truth than references to its messy, concrete reality.[66] If prevailing paradigms determine what is metaphorical language and what not, it becomes all the more important to pay attention to poets, who intimate what a new paradigm would look like, even if only inadvertently. The endeavour of grasping reality in words may be uncertain, but this is what zoopoetry relentlessly tries to achieve. It would therefore seem that exploring the space between anymals outside of the text and anymals that have been enlisted in symbolism is only a part of constitutes zoopoetics.

The following passage from *Moby Dick* can help us to understand why Driscoll and Hoffman's critique on the neither/nor sentence needs to be taken one step further:

> But even stripped of these supernatural surmisings, there was enough in the earthly make and incontestable character of the monster to strike the imagination with unwonted power. For, it was not so much his uncommon

66 Jaap van Brakel argues that natural species do not exist. One of the examples he discusses is water. It seems that the phenomenon of water can be easily defined as H_2O. However, Van Brakel shows that this presentation of water conceals many underlying decisions. For instance, it depends on whether and the extent to which water also bears H_3O+ en OH- ions. In steam – which is also reduced to the formula H_2O – there are H_4O_2 molecules. In the definition of water as H_2O, a decision has been taken not to incorporate those molecules. Moreover, Van Brakel points out that the only constant factor in water and steam is the fact that there are H-molecules and O-molecules. The presence of these molecules together, however, does not necessarily result in the phenomenon of water, since they can simply form a mixture. For a full overview of all of the problems with defining 'water' and other so-called natural species, see Van Brakel.

> bulk that so much distinguished him from other sperm whales, but, as was elsewhere thrown out – a peculiar snow-white wrinkled forehead, and a high, pyramidical white hump. (198)

The text goes on to describe the whale's distinct features, relating to both his body and character, which make the phrase "just a whale" seem odd. The descriptions are in fact too precise to convey just a whaleyness because, when we come to think of it and give the phrase a bit more attention, whales are never just whales. What is more, the metaphorical function of Moby Dick (who symbolises 'the force of nature', 'God', and everything else that humans cannot reason away) somewhat chafes with this description of his wrinkled forehead. Symbolism cannot thrive when too much individuality is involved. What makes this zoopoetical description zoopoetically successful, therefore, is not so much a mixture of metaphor and the whale himself as a presentation of individuality through the text's well-chosen words. Indeed, the whale is attentively described as an individual. In brief, having read this passage, we know more about the whale than we did before, even though he is a fictional character. For one, we have learned that he is someone we can get to know better, despite the metaphorical load that he is carrying.

The point I am trying to make here may become clearer if we modify the line "the white whale in Melville's *Moby Dick*" is neither "*just* a metaphor" nor "*just* a whale" (4). I propose replacing "Moby Dick" with 'Atticus Finch', the gentle, heroic father in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Thus altered, the sentence would become: "Atticus Finch is neither "just a man" nor a "fictional figure of a man". The meaning of this phrase appears somewhat obscure for several reasons:

1. It is not clear what "just a man" means. It seems to suggest that all men are the same, but since this cannot be right, the phrase must mean something else (but what?);
2. Atticus Finch is too real and too rich a fictional character for one to feel the need to relate him to anyone outside Lee's novel;
3. The opposition in which these two options are placed is opaque. Why would "just a man" be something other than a "fictional figure of a man"? We come to know someone through our perception, empathy, and imagination. This process is not so much different from that of coming to know a fictional character.

These doubts suggest that perhaps whales too (even the whale in *Moby Dick*) cannot be considered unknowable or just a representative of a species.[67] The problem starts with the idea that naïve literalism might be thought of as a straightforward concept, whereas it is not. The meaning of the phrase 'reading literally' is even opaque in the context in which it is used most frequently, namely theological debates about how to read the Bible.[68] Words refer to other words, webs of beliefs, and worldviews. Hence, naïve literalism – the idea that a word refers unequivocally to one object in reality – is not a defendable option in the context of poetic figures of anymals. In short, "just whales" do not exist but are in fact individual whales. The phrase "the mutual imbrication and entanglement of the material and the semiotic" Driscoll and Hoffmann propose as a description of the essence of zoopoetics, rests, to my mind, too much on the common view in that 'imbrications' seem to presuppose the material on the one side and the semiotic on the other. I get back to this opposition in the next paragraph on biosemiotics.

How then, should we approach De Martelaere's paradox (of touching the cat in language when wanting to go beyond language), which is in fact a zoopoetical paradox? Can we "walk flank to flank" with anymals if only we stop burdening them with symbolic service? As I mentioned in the Introduction, Driscoll paraphrases Bataille who answers the question negatively:

> [P]oetry and animality are intimately linked, since animality, understood as nonhuman subjectivity or non-linguistic consciousness, is that which eternally eludes our attempts to capture it in language. In absolute terms, this poetic leap is doomed to fail – we will never reach the other side – but this is precisely what constitutes its value. ("Sticky Temptation" 216)

The citation resembles Jenny Diski's view on the unbridgeable abyss between human and non-human, which I discussed in the first chapter. The wording is practically the same and in both cases the passages are followed by a reference

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67 Another reason for the fact that it may be hard to understand the opposition described in 3. would be that the impact of the character of Atticus Finch reaches well beyond the boundaries of *To Kill a Mockingbird* as a text. When Harper Lee died on 15 February 2016, Barack and Michelle Obama said that "What that one story did, more powerfully than one hundred speeches possibly could, was change the way we saw each other, and then the way we saw ourselves" (qtd. in Jamieson). If a fictional text has such a bearing on society and is read over and over again, there is less care whether the character is living down the street or living in a fictional street. Along with the character's realness and richness, the book's impact makes the question otiose.

68 For instance, how are we to read the many images in "Song of Solomon", such as "Your eyes are doves"? (*English Standard Version*, "Song of Sol." 1:15) Or why would we understand Jesus' parables as moral lessons if we were to read them literally?

to Nagel's bat argument. It might even seem that in poetry, the abyss to be leapt across is even wider, since poems face not only an assumed opposition of non-human versus human, but between poetry versus reality too.

What we can see here is that literature and philosophy tend to be out of tune with research on anymal cognition, which refutes the existence of an abyss. The way to access anymal minds (if that is at all the right wording) is not only by making analogies with our own subjective experience. In chapter 1 we learned that the notion of having to leap over an abyss can be questioned on many levels, not least because it wrongly assumes speciesism; that anymals are languagelessness; that anthropomorphism is inevitable (which is itself based on speciesism); and the idea that a mind is something closed off from the world, behaviour being the mind's only visible expression. Moreover, the image of a leap over an abyss suggests two separate selves, which turns empathy and shifts of perspective into phenomena that are either done completely or not at all. A more accurate image of what anymal cognition research shows us, I would suggest, is that of a gradual perspective shift by which one slowly but surely comes to understand anymals' experiential lives.

Conversely, anymal cognitivists might learn from poets and poetry. What Elizabeth Bishop has to say about the presumed line between words and things offers animal studies a better understanding of the accordance between world and word:

> One of the causes of poetry must be ... the feeling that the contemporary language is not equivalent to the contemporary fact; there is something out of proportion between them, and what is being said in words is not at all what is being said in "things." To connect this disproportion a pretense is at first necessary. By "pretending" the existence of a language appropriate and comparable to the "things" it must deal with, the language is forced into being. It is learned by one person, by a few, by all who can become interested in that poet's poetry. But as this imaginary language is elaborated and is understood by more people, it begins to work two ways at once. "Things" gave rise to the language; now the language arouses an independent life in the "things," first dimly perceived in them only by the poet. (*Jukebox* 183)

Bishop's feeling of contemporary language not equating with contemporary fact arguably appertains to language in general, in that naming facts would be an endless undertaking without a paradigm determining which facts are relevant. Bishop's explanation that things come into being through the language of the poet underscores my claim that we should pay attention to poets who question paradigms, for instance the paradigm of fact versus metaphor.

Indeed, in the Introduction I claim that such poets can be seen as "conceptual deconstructionists".

By "pretense" and "trying out", poetic language and especially zoopoetical language can give rise to "things" in that they have the *thisness* Fischer writes about (see chapter 1). An excellent example is the neologistic use of the noun "unsmell" by Les Murray in "Yard Horse", which I have discussed in chapter 3. We understand horses better thanks to this neologism, in that we see them more clearly because their experiential lives have become more real to us. Through the word, the "thing" that was first perceived only by the poet takes on a life of its own. Hence, on the one hand, profiting from research done in anymal cognition, we do not have to take a doomed-to-fail leap across an abyss; on the other, poets question our paradigms. In so doing, they alter us and lead us to a deeper understanding of the world.

4.3.2 Biosemiotics: The nature of zoopoetics

> It is not only poets who recognise that poetry and the world are closely linked. Work in the field of biosemiotics is challenging the speciesist binary of human versus animal and even questioning the idea that there is a gap between language, text, and world. Biosemioticians claim that nature itself operates in a poetic manner and that in order to understand nature we need to learn to read poetry and recognise poetic tropes and tools. Biosemiotics conjoins biology and semiotics in an attempt to shift the paradigm in biology from a view in which organisms passively react to their surroundings towards a conception of all organisms as interpretative beings. Uexküll and the linguist Thomas Sebeok are important forerunners of this school. Sebeok introduces the term "zoosemiotics", which inserts linguistics into biology by means of an understanding of semiosis as "simply … the instinctive capacity of all living organisms to produce and understand signs" (3). Encapsulated concisely, the paradigm shift that biosemioticians are developing results in an understanding of organisms as creatures with interpretative agency.

Because interpretation is pivotal when it comes to understanding organisms, biosemioticians advocate turning towards the humanities, since it is there that the art of reading (in an encompassing sense including interpretation and translation) is developed. Indeed, the biosemiotician Wendy Wheeler urges biologists to become scholars in the humanities, arguing that:

> [m]olecular biologists trying to understand the workings of DNA molecules have, indeed, been obliged to borrow their lexicon from the languages of semiotics (codes, expressions, reading, transcriptions, translations, interpretations, and so on). ("Critical Theory" 27-28)

Moreover, biosemioticians argue that figures of speech that have long been considered the stock in trade of the poet can be found in nature. Figures of speech have a natural history, they claim, and, as Wheeler puts it, do not "spring fully formed from the head of Zeus, appearing only in *Homo Sapiens*" ("Introduction" 10). Ascribing a natural history to figures of speech may sound confusing: what might it mean to say that nature itself uses poetic tools?

Besides the emphasis on organisms as agents interpreting their environment instead of merely reacting to it, biosemioticians also advocate another view of nature as a whole. Again, in the old paradigm the only explanation for all that exists is that it apparently was well adapted enough to have persisted. Biosemioticians disagree with this reductionist view of all that lives because nature "is a tinkerer", as Wheeler argues ("Lightest Burden" 32). Nature tries things out, creating meaning by making loose new connections. This take on organisms, an example of which follows shortly, grants them more agency. Related to this view of organisms being agents is the biosemioticians' emphasis on abduction instead of induction or deduction. Wheeler points out that in the sciences nature is expected to fit into two schemes of reasoning, induction and deduction. These schemes would be enough if nature did indeed behave mechanically in accordance with natural laws. Since nature is granted more agency in the biosemiotic paradigm, however, scientists are forced to abandon the mechanical paradigm. And since the sciences lay too much emphasis on deduction and induction as the ways of coming to knowledge about nature (which works, when organisms are machines), they overlook nature's abductive creativity.

Overlooking the possibility of nature being creative indeed fits neatly into a worldview that considers human beings the only creative creatures on earth and all other organisms' behaviour merely efficient. In this received Cartesian paradigm, anymals' creativity, play, communication, and artistry all fall into the category of anomalies, not because they *are* anomalous, but merely because they are evaluated within the wrong paradigm. In the following passage, Kalevi Kull points out why the sciences need the humanities in understanding life:

> The problem of novelty, the question of the source of diversity and new information, is one of [the] most fundamental questions in biology, in understanding life. Therefore, finding the poetic or poetic-like processes in living systems is what biosemiotics is about, and this is exactly where we need the humanities, the specialists in the arts. (17)

Poets and "poetic-like" processes can inform us about the world because tropes, tools, and language as a whole are not meta-natural phenomena; they are found in nature. What is more, it is thanks to the zoopoetical tool of metaphor that we can understand and even *see* the behaviour of anymals. As, for instance, of the wolf in the following passage, in which the researcher Gregory Bateson recounts a visit to the zoo, where he observes wolves. If we were to hold on to the paradigm of anymals being merely reactive creatures, we would simply miss what happens here:

> I went to see the nice little pack of wolves in Chicago at the Brookfield Zoo, ten of them lying asleep all day and the eleventh one, the dominant male, busily running around keeping track of things. Now what wolves do is to go out hunting and then come home and regurgitate their food to share with the puppies who weren't along on the hunt. And the puppies can signal the adults to regurgitate. But eventually the adult wolves wean the babies from the regurgitated food by pressing down with their jaws on the backs of the babies' necks. In the domestic dog, females eventually wean their young from milk in the same way. In Chicago they told me that the previous year one of the junior males had succeeded in mounting a female. Up rushed the lead male – the alpha animal – but instead of mayhem all that happened was that the leader pressed the head of the junior male down to the ground in the same way, once, twice, four times, and then walked off. The communication that occurred was metaphoric: 'You puppy, you!' The communication to the junior wolf of how to behave is based on a syllogism in grass. (qtd. in "Introduction" 6)

Syllogisms in grass have the following form: "grass dies, men die, men are grass" ("Introduction" 5). This characterisation of what we normally would call a fallacy is Bateson's portrayal of how abductive nature works: it tries things out and – if the attempt works – creates new meanings. The action taken by the lead male in the pack of wolves is metaphorical, in the sense that the category of "puppy weaning from regurgitated food or milk" is mapped onto the behaviour of the junior wolf. This results in a new meaning, which can be rendered verbally as something like "you are too young to mount her". The

lead wolf tinkers with meaning and metaphor. Since the metaphor works – it makes a difference in the behaviour of the junior wolf – the behaviour cannot be explained mechanistically; it is the result of an interpretation.

The fact that we can discover poetic processes in nature teaches us that the opposition between naïve literalism and metaphors is not informative. Metaphors, it would seem, are a natural phenomenon. Thus, text and world are not to be seen as opposites. As soon as we recognise that nature uses tropes, we can also let go of other oppositions: those of behaviour versus mind, mind versus body, object versus subject, and instinct versus cognition. By dismantling these barring convictions, it is possible for poetry to 'unconceal' worlds.

4.3.3 Zoopoetics as unconcealment

In a famous paragraph in *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans*, Uexküll explains how a supposedly singular object – his example is an oak – can harbour different subjective environments. In a series of drawings, the oak is portrayed in the environments of a forester, girl, fox, owl, ant, and bark beetle. Readers are invited to direct their attention and zoom in or out according to the different aspects of the oak that are important in the respective organisms' environments. Whereas the forester ponders the oak's dead branches and wonders whether they should be severed, the girl sees a frightening face in the tree trunk, putting the oak in a magical environment. The fox and owl use the oak as a hiding spot, though in opposite ends of the tree, whereas for the ant it forms a hunting ground and for the beetle it is a breeding spot. Moving from how the oak affects subjects to the oak as object, Uexküll writes:

> In the hundred different environments of its inhabitants, the oak plays an ever-changing role as object, sometimes with some parts, sometimes with others. The same parts are alternately large and small. Its wood is both hard and soft; it serves for attack and for defense. If one wanted to summarize all the different characteristics shown by the oak as an object, this would only give rise to chaos. Yet these are only parts of a subject that is solidly put together in itself, which carries and shelters all environments – one which is never known by all the subjects of these environments and never knowable for them. (132)

Strikingly, Uexküll forgets himself in this passage, becoming a selfless observer who cannot become a beetle, ant, or fox, but nevertheless presents their environments from their perspectives. Uexküll desires to know their perspectives

from their point of view; his drawings and ponderings are aimed at capturing their environment as much as possible. He takes a foray into anymals' various worlds and discloses them for us. From these forays, we learn that there is no one ultimate thing; reality is not entirely given to us or any other species. Yet Uexküll demonstrates that in disclosing a world it helps to assume a selfless view, which comes down to shelving one's own interests and perspective and constantly paying attention to the world of the anymal in question. Continuing with the example of the oak's occupants, saying that an owl is "high up in the tree" does not help to disclose the owl's world. The notion of being "high up" makes sense from a human perspective (perhaps a fox's too). Even giving scientific classifications by naming order, genus, and species, although it might seem selfless, does nothing more than describe a human categorisation. Every organism creates its own *Umwelt* and a foray into these worlds is only possible if barring convictions are left behind.

It is on account of its ability to lessen such convictions that the philosopher Martin Heidegger emphasises the role of poetry in disclosing reality. Heidegger read Uexküll, developing a conception of truth and being is not so much based on the conceptual pairs of "material and the semiotic, the body and the text, the animal and the world" (Driscoll and Hoffmann 4). For Heidegger, we can encounter reality in poetic texts. Heidegger's notion of truth is best understood as 'unconcealment'. Here we can see Uexküll's influence, for in the quotation above the oak is *disclosed* through the study of the anymals' various perspectives. It is in this process of disclosure, Heidegger argues, that poetry has a special role:

> Poetry, however, is no aimless imagining of whimsicalities, and no flight of mere representations and fancies into the unreal. What poetry, as clearing projection, unfolds of unconcealment and projects into the rift within the figure is the open; poetry allows this open to happen in such a way, indeed, that now, for the first time, in the midst of beings, it brings them to shine and sound. (45)

It is because Heidegger abandons the conception of truth as the correspondence between thought and thing that he can speak of art and in particular poetry as the essence of truth. In poetry we can find a clearing in which beings can dwell (46-47). Any attempt to bring thought and world into accordance with one another will reduce the being to a fixed, timeless definition of that being, which does not exist. By emphasising the dimension of making (*poïesis*) in poetry, Heidegger breaks away from the Platonic idea that truth is eternal and reality unattainable; truth presences only in time as part of the unconceal-

ment of being, which is not deformed by scientific classifications and social interests. This understanding of truth is implicit in zoopoets' aim, namely that of creating an individual anymal that is allowed to exist without being used or deformed.

In theorising zoopoetry, I have found that the binary of literal versus figurative falls short, for it rests on a Platonic conception of art as the representation of reality. It is rather that poetry heightens reality: in many instances of zoopoetry, the anymal is presented without any preconceived goal or self interest. Poetry seeks to open up worlds, and zoopoets disclose anymals' worlds by showing them in a non-truncated manner. A fully zoopoetical presentation of anymals therefore goes beyond either a naïve literal depiction (whatever that might be) or a metaphorised treatment.

The poem "Inventing a Horse" by Meghan O'Rourke illustrates what I mean by referring to 'heightened reality' in a Heideggerian sense. Or, more accurately put: Heidegger's thought explains what is going on in good poetry such as this.[69]

Inventing a horse is not easy.
One must not only think of the horse.
One must dig fence posts around him.
One must include a place where horses like to live;

or do when they live with humans like you.
Slowly, you must walk him in the cold;
feed him bran mash, apples;
accustom him to the harness;

holding in mind even when you are tired
harnesses and tack cloths and saddle oil
to keep the saddle clean as a face in the sun;
one must imagine teaching him to run

among the knuckles of tree roots,
not to be skittish at first sight of timber wolves,
and not to grow thin in the city,
where at some point you will have to live;

69 Although this discussion of "Inventing a Horse" has been published in my article "Animal Poetry and Empathy", I have developed it for this section.

and one must imagine the absence of money.
Most of all, though: the living weight,
the sound of his feet on the needles,
and, since he is heavy, and real,

and sometimes tired after a run
down the river with a light whip at his side,
one must imagine love
in the mind that does not know love,

an animal mind, a love that does not depend
on your image of it,
your understanding of it;
indifferent to all that it lacks:

a muzzle and two black eyes
looking the day away, a field empty
of everything but witchgrass, fluent trees,
and some piles of hay.
(O'Rourke, ll. 1-32)

The poem starts off with the optimistic title of "Inventing a Horse", which is immediately downplayed and completed by the first line: "Inventing a horse is not easy". To explain why it is not easy, O'Rourke asks the reader to imagine all of the things that one has to have and bear in mind when keeping a horse in real life. The idea of inventing the horse, then, is no gratuitous fantasy; it goes further than simply bringing a picture to mind. All of these things are listed in the first four stanzas. They probably echo the reservations that O'Rourke's parents might have had when, as a child, she expressed her wish to have a horse.

O'Rourke interrupts her list of practicalities in the fifth stanza. The sentence that begins in line 6 ends in line 13 by imagining the absence of money as the outcome of all of the material things that one would need. After this conclusion, it is as if the speaker asks herself again what inventing a horse involves. This time, it seems that listing of practicalities is not enough. Then, in lines 18, 19, and 20, she focuses first on the body (the living weight, sound of his feet on the needles, and again his heaviness). After that, she turns to the horse's "mind", a word that she alternates with "love". It is noteworthy that in the second line of the poem O'Rourke warns the reader that one must not only think of the horse, but of its surroundings too. As this imagining of the horse's environment goes on, its body nevertheless slowly comes into view. The sentence that

ends in the final line ends in line 16. Given that the main clause is interrupted by both a subordinated and a coordinated clause, the reader almost forgets that "since he is heavy and real /... / one must imagine love". The word "real" stands out in this line. All of the horse's characteristics are mentioned and it is as if its realness is one among these many qualities. One might judge this a category mistake ("I have a brown, quick, strong and real horse"), but in this case the mistake is intended. It reminds the reader of the task of a poet, which, as I have suggested, is captured by the Greek word *poïesis*, which means to make or create something. Like Heidegger's interpretation of being, this category mistake is also a reminder that something real ultimately cannot be compartmentalised: the horse will finally elude all of the definitions projected onto him.

The enjambment after "love" in line 23 reflects the difficulty with the kind of love that O'Rourke wants the reader to imagine. One must imagine love, yes; the whole point of keeping a horse is to nurture one's love for the anymal. However, this love will be less romantic than the clichéd imagery of horses offered by television series. The love at stake here is devoted to a real anymal whose mind does not know love. Or, as the following line puts it: it is a love that does not depend on the image of it in a human mind. How can anyone imagine this form of love? Can we set aside our comforting images and preoccupations to picture an anymal mind?

In the final lines, O'Rourke helps the reader to imagine the hardest part of the invention, namely the horse on his own terms. To imagine this, one needs to leave one's own interests, practicalities, and even images of love behind. It is here that selflessness creates reality. When she focuses on the horse's black eyes, the speaker not only describes what they look like, but also what they see. In the ongoing act of invention – the realisation that easy images will not do and the constant effort of setting aside one's own convictions of what a horse essentially is – O'Rourke finally imagines the horse from the horse's point of view. At this juncture, the speaker describes the world as seen through his eyes: "a field empty / of everything but witchgrass, fluent trees / and some piles of hay" (lines 30-32). The clearing the poem creates for the horse is present and whole: he is no longer a 'beauty', 'work horse', 'noble animal', 'man's loyal servant', or anything else. In the place of these categories, we have a real, whole horse that exists nowhere but in the poem.

To complete this chapter, it is important to show that zoopoetics' characteristics each underscore and assume one other. The task of the poet, apparently, is that of paying selfless attention, especially to things that we initially consider unworthy of scrutiny. Then, to achieve this selfless attention, a downfallow is needed. In the end, then, zoopoetics is not an exercise in limitrophy, as Driscoll and Hoffmann suggest. Rather, it is exercised through downfallows. We can

experience a downfallow through the ellipsis of the verb and pronoun in "a field empty / of everything but witchgrass, fluent trees, / and some piles of hay". At this point, the anymal mind mentioned six lines earlier is out of the reader's mind and in the final stanza we are drawn, thanks to the ellipsis, into a 'clearing' of an equine way of seeing. We simultaneously see a horse staring and experience a way of looking that may not correspond to the form of vision that characterises our busy goal-oriented lives. Despite not presenting a fully fledged example, the ellipsis of the verb and pronoun is used here to enter the *Umwelt* of the horse. Moreover, and more generally, as a poetic tool pronoun drop can be informative for biologists. It might change the ways in which we think about defining organisms and alert us to anthropomorphisms at work in how we describe their lifespan; without assuming a fixed perspective belonging to a definite self, poets show us how to present these organisms' *Umwelten*.

A next and final step that I must take is that of explaining that important concepts in zoopoetics prepare us to explore zoopoetical empathy. It is to the subject of zoopoetical empathy that I now turn in the fifth chapter of this study.

5

TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF ZOOPOETICAL EMPATHY

5.1 Introduction

With the foregoing chapters zeroing in on specific zoopoetical tools and the nature of zoopoetics, we seem to have diverged considerably from my initial questions regarding empathy and what it is like to be a dog, horse, whale, or bat. However, what looks like a diversion is in fact an encompassing movement through which I have explored the salient ways in which zoopoetry elicits readers to empathise with anymals and imaginatively assume their perspectives. In this chapter I explain why I have taken this roundabout route.

In the first chapter I discussed the various labels that have been found for the notion of 'feeling with' put forward by John Coetzee in *Lives*. The variations in these descriptions indicate just how narrow the default definition of empathy is. On this truncated view, empathy amounts to a matching of emotions between separate, real, and similar humans. To me, this grasp of the phenomenality that 'feeling with' can bring about seems problematic. Besides, this default definition of empathy results in a hierarchy of empathetic processes, whereby the cognitive re-enactment of another human's emotion is ranked above the mirroring of, for instance, bodily postures. Indeed, some researchers do not count most manifestations of 'feeling with' as instances of empathy on the grounds that they lack a cognitive component (Coplan and Goldie; Maibom, *Empathy*). This assumed hierarchy feeds the scepticism that precludes the possibility of 'feeling with' anymals in advance. To challenge this exclusionary approach, in previous chapters I have questioned some of the assumptions at work in the empathy debate by way of a discussion of zoopoetry.

Standard distinctions in the empathy debate stand in the way of attempts to understand the 'feeling with' elicited through zoopoetry. The assumed contrast between affective and cognitive empathy, based on the remnants of the Cartesian body/mind dualism, holds many back from recognising an art form

that presents all aspects of life as intertwined and that moves us accordingly. Furthermore, the idea that only cognition can make an emotion empathetic shortchanges the potential effects of poetry or any other arts practices. What happens when one appreciates art, I argue in this chapter, is very much comparable to a distinct aspect of what can occur when one experiences empathy: the self recedes to the background so as to provide space for the other or the work of art. As the previous chapters make clear, zoopoetical tools point to a specifically zoopoetical form of empathy. Although it differs considerably from traditional understandings of the term, this practice of empathy is still best understood as a form of 'feeling with'. My purpose in this chapter is to formulate a concept of zoopoetical empathy and reflect on what this concept might mean for the empathy debate in general.

This final section of this study consists of two chapters, 5 and 6. In this chapter, I explore the concepts and distinctions that we need to define zoopoetical empathy. In this theoretical chapter, I start with a brief inquiry into how various art forms have been evaluated through the lens of the dominant paradigm in empathy studies. Instead of taking works of art as instructive for considering what empathy might entail in this research area, most researchers start with the interpersonal definition of empathy and then try to find the ways in which works of art match up with that definition. By distinguishing various zoopoetical tools in chapter 3, I took the opposite tack of letting zoopoetry dictate the contours of a definition of zoopoetical empathy. I develop this definition in this chapter.

In this chapter, I describe what binds the work of different zoopoets together. I think that the prime effect of the zoopoetical tools – namely, a diminishing of the self, which provides space for anymals to roam around on their own terms – is best explained and deepened through the concept of attention, as it is concretised by the philosophers Simone Weil and Iris Murdoch. The 'feeling with' elicited through zoopoetry needs to account for the phenomenality of a receding self. The process of one's self being effaced is not currently a topic in research on empathy. Indeed, it cannot arise as a topic, for interpersonal empathy presumes distinct selves. In experiencing art, however, spectators or readers often report a feeling of a "loss of self" (Stadler 321; I discuss this topic in section 5.2). Weil's and Murdoch's concept of attention offers a fruitful way of accounting for this feeling, since it does not require a self as a prerequisite for matching emotions. Instead, it calls for an emptied, yet still distinct self. Moreover, this concept of attention is rooted in aesthetic experience. To Murdoch, it is through a work of art and through the observation of nature that selfless attention is established. On both Weil's and Murdoch's interpretation, attention casts new light on the opposition between projection

and empathy in the empathy debate. In the case of zoopoetry, this opposition comes down to the contrast between anthropomorphism and empathy. In leaving Cartesian dualism behind and exploring instances of 'feeling with', we need an approach that emphasises perception and openness, rather than seeking to match similar peoples' emotions. I conclude this theoretical chapter by enumerating those aspects of selfless attention that trace the contours of a definition of zoopoetical empathy.

Chapter 6 consists of four poetic case studies, in which I discuss the work of Elizabeth Bishop, Ted Hughes, M. Vasalis, Les Murray, Judith Beveridge, Frederike Harmsen van Beek, and Mary Oliver in the light of the enumerated element of selfless attention. That said, the sections on their poetry form small, stand-alone explorations that do justice to the singularity of their work. Methodologically, my approach to formulating a definition of zoopoetical empathy is best described as hermeneutical; the zoopoetical tools forged out in the poems in chapter 3 point to concepts and distinctions in the work of Weil and Murdoch. Conversely, I draw on Weil's and Murdoch's thought in interpreting the poems in chapter 6 and coming to an understanding of zoopoetical empathy.

Contrary to Maibom's and Coplan's assumption that cognition is indispensable for the process of empathy (see chapter 1), I argue that 'feeling with' need not solely be the result of a thought process that turns self-directed emotions into other-oriented emotions. Zoopoetry too can establish this.

5.2 The effect of evaluating art through the default definition of empathy

In chapter 1 I elaborated on the presuppositions underlying the empathy debate. I argued that two edited volumes – Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie's *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives* (2014) and Heidi Maibom's *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Empathy* (2019) – assume a separate self, the need for similarity, and, subsequently, the notion of matching emotions. These presuppositions demand conceptual analysis, in which I let zoopoetry play a key role. These two reference works resemble each other in adhering to the same tacit ideas of what a self is and what it means for selves to be alike. Unlike Coplan and Goldie, however, Maibom's *Handbook* leaves room for a different approach in that it includes two chapters that question the concepts of separate selves and emotional matching. One, by Dan Zahavi, is written from a phenomenological perspective; the other, by Emily McRae, relates to the interpretation of the notion of empathy in the Buddhist tradition.

As I have discussed in chapter 1, Zahavi questions the idea of matching by stressing that "everything else resembles everything else in some respect". The basis of empathy, he suggests, is not matching emotions but the need to "spend time together" ("Phenomenology" 36, 37). The Buddhist approach to empathy also differs from the standard definition. McRae writes that the Buddhist tradition focuses on the need for "dismantling narratives of self-clinging" (124). In both chapters, the necessity of matching (whether emotional or bodily) is diminished, which results in a broadening of our empathic horizons. McRae sees that in Buddhism "there are no necessary limits on our capacity to empathize (and feel compassion), only the ever-changing limitations of previous conditioning, which can be undone, although not always easily" (132). Despite the inclusion of these two chapters in the *Handbook*, however, most of the other contributions take for granted the default definition of empathy, which involves matching emotions between separate, real, and similar humans.

In both Coplan and Goldie's *Empathy* and Maibom's *Handbook*, the separation of affective from cognitive empathy affects how inquiries into empathy in aesthetics are presented. These inquiries also usually treat empathy as a process that unfolds between persons. The ingredients of aesthetic empathy, therefore, are derived from the default definition: there has to be some sort of fictional (preferably human) character with whom the reader can identify. On that basis, the reader can experience feelings that match the character's; this process must occur between character and reader. Lastly, the matching of feelings has to be the result of cognitive perspective taking. In order to include these ingredients, the standard choice of research object in work on aesthetic empathy has been the novel with human protagonists.

As part of this strand of thought, when a work of art does not involve a form of character development, researchers typically link aesthetic empathy to the simulation of (bodily) movement. For instance, Gregory Currie writes that if we look at Rubens' painting *Descent from the Cross* we "undergo bodily simulations which mirror aspects of [the depicted people's] dispositions" (86-87). Indeed, in instances in which we are not reading about a character with whom we can swap cognitive perspectives, it would seem that there is nothing left for us to do but mirror bodily dispositions. Here, a trace of Cartesian dualism is noticeable in an evaluation of art. A depiction of living people on canvas can never be only a depiction of bodily postures (not least when the person depicted is Christ). Christ and the persons surrounding him are such well-known characters that we cannot merely see their physical dispositions. We see Christ's body and his mother's desperate look. We see lived bodies taking care of a deceased son, friend, and teacher; the history of their mourning is visible in their postures.

In another contribution to Maibom's *Handbook*, Noël Carroll wonders with whom we empathise when looking at paintings. He asks whether we are empathising with the figures on the canvas, the painter, or perhaps even the whole of the depicted scene. As an illustration of his argument he takes Titan's *The Flaying of Marsyas* (approx. 1570), arguing that we do not empathise with Marsyas as he is flayed, for it is "improbable that the viewer of Titian's masterpiece can be feeling what he is feeling". Rather, viewers feel sorrow for what befalls Marsyas – an emotion that does not match up with Marsyas' feelings. To save the value of empathy as an explanatory concept for analysing paintings, Carroll introduces the term of "vectorially converging emotions" by which he means that viewers have emotions that align with those of the depicted characters – "Marsyas is feeling regret. We are feeling sorrow" (287, 287).

In my view, Carroll pays too little attention to the fact that we are the viewers of a *painting*; his analysis would also apply to watching the news and,

conversely, not apply to non-figurative paintings. Furthermore, it seems that Carroll uses an argument to the consequence; the result of leaving empathy out of one's analysis would presumably degrade the painting. To retain the concept of empathy as an analytical tool, he explains our aesthetic experiences of viewing the painting in the light of the default definition of empathy. This definition is all the more evident where Carroll rejects the possibility (suggested by Dominic McIver Lopes) that we might empathise with the scene as a whole. For Carroll, this cannot hold water as an alternative interpretation of the term empathy, for the emotions conveyed by scenes differ from those of the characters: "a painting of a battle may express a feeling of confusion, without any of the depicted warriors expressing being confused". Matching feelings are seen as a prerequisite here and it would appear that such matching can only occur between separate persons. Even more so, scenes, persons, and stories are to be seen as separate. Carroll also rejects Jenefer Robinson's hypothesis that we are invited to partake in a mood presented by a painting. "[W]hat grounds this mood?", he counters. "Objects like paintings don't have moods or attitudes or points of view. So, where do they allegedly come from?" (290, 291).

On a different note – but also as a consequence of taking interpersonal empathy as the default definition – in her chapter on "Empathy in Music" the aforementioned Jenefer Robinson suggests that "high-level" affective empathy and "low-level" sub-personal motor simulation processes may work together in music (300). This might explain the medium's often powerful effects. The fact that Robinson has to argue that these two levels may work together indicates that this integration is not part of the standard account of empathy.

A final outcome of taking the default definition of empathy for granted that I will discuss here is found in Jane Stadler's chapter on empathy in film. Working with the traditional definition of empathy in relation to the aesthetics of film, Stadler responds to Adriano D'Aloia, who refers to an inquiry carried out by Albert Michotte. Michotte noticed that "viewers feel inside characters resulting in a fusion of consciousness. This fusion is achieved via "inner imitation" as the observer internally reproduces the movements of the observed person". This is related, D'Aloia argues, to viewers experiencing a "loss of self", which brings him to say that viewers undergo "a total assimilation of subjectivities". Stadler, however, refuses to consider this to be a possibility: "[n]eedless to say," she writes, "'total assimilation of subjectivities' only occurs in science fiction and would not, in any event, be an instance of empathy". Although Michotte describes what he has found in viewers' experiences, Stadler calls this description an "overstatement" (189, 321, 321). I would suggest that this dismissal serves to preserve the default definition of empathy, whereas it would have been more fruitful to take viewers' experiences of 'feeling with' into consideration.

Rather than contrasting various aesthetic fields with the prototype of empathy, I think that it is more instructive to take a specific art form as a guide for investigating specific kind of 'feeling with' that it instigates. Eileen John uses this methodology when she writes that a "literary work can make the potential, the limits, and strangeness of empathy into themes" ("Empathy" 309). She comes to this conclusion after having pondered instances of empathy that she experienced when reading "Axolotl", a story written by Julio Cortázar. Feeling empathetic towards a fictionalised axolotl (a salamander) might arouse scepticism, but it may also cause us to wonder about the default definition of empathy and, more to the point, what we lose when we adjust specific instances so as to fit that definition. By contrast, John seeks to formulate the particular ways in which a literary work establishes instances of empathy:

> A broader point that seems relevant is that reading fiction is an activity we seek out partly in order to change our agency and "centeredness" with respect to thought and feeling. There is a relaxation of control, some kind of openness to letting other patterns of attention, conceptualization, and evaluation occupy the experiential foreground. However we ultimately locate "the self" in the psychological processes at work, it seems that empathetic response to characters is one important form of experience enabled by this openness. ("Empathy" 313)

In chapter 3 I discussed the 'openness' that results from the zoopoetical tools of questioning and hesitation. Here we can see how John emphasises the phenomenon of openness in formulating the boundaries of empathy in relation to literature. Notions of "openness", a "relaxation of control", "change [in] our agency", and "centeredness", however, do not accord with the standard understanding of empathy. Yet they are the outcome of turning the hierarchy around; John does not work from the default definition and then argue that literature does or does not elicit this form of empathy. Instead, she starts with art and investigates the types of 'feeling with' that it brings to the fore. Although of course John has a sense of what 'feeling with' could mean, she prioritises the phenomena over the definition.

In addition to the possibility that we might find other forms of 'feeling with', reversing the order of phenomena and definition in this way reveals that the default definition of empathy cannot account for all instances of 'feeling with', even according to Maibom's broad definition of empathy (see chapter 1 and the introduction to this chapter). Moreover, the openness that lets other patterns of attention take over indicates that, contrary to what Maibom

suggests, it is not only cognition that remoulds self-centred emotions into other-centred emotions. Literary works can do this too.

Formulating a definition of empathy from the evidence of the experience of artworks requires a new concept, which John tentatively describes in terms of "openness". Although this may be a novel grasp of the phenomenology of empathy in the context of the empathy debate, it is not new to anyone who puts the arts first when analysing the relation between art and empathy. Indeed, "a relaxation of control" and shifts in "centeredness" and "agency" are both the effect of zoopoetical tools and a requirement for writing zoopoetry. A separate self is an absolute prerequisite in the interpersonal understanding of empathy, yet John hints that the self's importance might recede to the background when she writes: "other patterns of attention, conceptualization, and evaluation occupy the experiential foreground" ("Empathy" 313). We cannot reflect on zoopoetry without engaging with implicit assumptions about anthropomorphism and speciesism, as well as existing definitions of self. All of these assumptions, however, rest on one tacitly agreed ground, which is the existence of a self, however sketchy, and an inkling of how it is distinct from other selves. As I have discussed in chapter 1, phenomenology lets go of Cartesian binaries and points to different concepts in the empathy debate. Instead of searching for matching separate selves, 'openness' and 'perception' become the important markers. Following John's approach, we might ask whether there can be such a thing as empathy without distinct selves.

Simone Weil and Iris Murdoch elaborate on this question in depth. I draw on their thought in formulating a definition of zoopoetical empathy. In previous chapters on zoopoetical tools, I have emphasised that a definition of zoopoetical empathy needs to take into account the silencing of human subjectivity. In short, this silencing is the aim of all of these tools, through which they are able to bring readers closer to anymals. Seen from an interpersonal definition, empathising with anymals may not initially seem to be the central point of focus in Weil's or Murdoch's work. In their insistence on silencing human subjectivity in a process of unselfing, however, Weil and Murdoch indirectly put forward a new interpretation of what empathy might involve. In their elaboration of unselfing we find the same motifs that spur poets to write about anymals. Moreover, as I see it, poetry and unselfing have an intrinsic bond, which is established and developed through zoopoetical tools.

5.3 'Unselfing' as the organising principle for understanding zoopoetical empathy

Attention is a key term in the work of both the French philosopher and activist Simone Weil and the novelist and philosopher Iris Murdoch. In her exploration of Murdoch's concept of moral attention, Claude Gendron remarks that the notion has been "ignored or neglected by mainstream ethical theories" (373). I would suggest that the notion of attention has been similarly overlooked in the empathy debate. The area of zoopoetry shows that there is a need to broaden our understanding of empathy, as John points out in discussing "Axolotl". For my line of thought, the notion of attention has a twofold function. For one, it expresses the phenomenality of being immersed in a work of art. At the same time, it does not impose the interpersonal definition of empathy on either art or nature.

The importance of the notion of attention was first introduced by Weil, who plays on the double reference of the French verb 'attendre' to both 'waiting' and 'paying attention'. This helps her explain what happens when someone is truly attentive:

> Attention consists of suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty, and ready to be penetrated by the object; it means holding in our minds, within reach of this thought, but on a lower level and not in contact with it, the diverse knowledge we have acquired which we are forced to make use of. Our thought should be in relation to all particular and already formulated thoughts, as a man on a mountain who, as he looks forward, sees also below him, without actually looking at them, a great many forests and plains. Above all our thought should be empty, waiting, not seeking anything, but ready to receive in its naked truth the object that is to penetrate it. (*Waiting* 111-112).

An object can only enter the mind when our thoughts are empty. If we do not exercise our minds to suspend thought, then we allow projections and categorisations to distort objects, contrary to the man on the mountain who sees without looking. It is therefore essential to leave categorisations behind and patiently *wait* to welcome the object as it is presented to the senses.

In Weil's vocabulary, the notion of truth is comprehended as that which is presented to us in unblurred vision. This notion of 'naked truth', as expressed in the quote above, echoes Plato's idea of truth as abstract, pure and clear. Indeed, Weil follows Plato's characterisation of truth in some respects, but diverges from his idea that truth is unattainable in our messy world. For Weil, it is possible for us to see the 'naked truth' of the other if we train our vision to be attentive. 'Naked', then, refers to the abstract object of truth in Plato's work. In Weil's work, however, it refers to an ego that has been stripped of thought and its accompanying categorisations. To establish the ways in which Weil's concept of attention might benefit anymals, the philosopher Elisa Aaltola shows how anymals are squeezed into humans' self-serving interests on a daily basis:

> Animals are traditionally defined on the grounds of their use-value, and thus we speak of "farmed animals", "pets", "prey animals" and so forth depicting even their mental abilities and their moral status solely on the grounds of what category of use they belong to (hence, many tend to see least cognitive ability in the animals they use the most for food). Human interests and desires stand at the root of how nonhuman animals are defined and valued: pigs are presented as mentally dull sources of bacon with only instrumental value, if doing so enhances utilization. ("Love and Animals" 196)

According to Aaltola, these degradations of anymals are best explained through Iris Murdoch's distinction between phantasy and the imagination. For Murdoch, phantasy refers to an overly self-directed notion of what we hold to be true, whereas imagination amounts to an exploration of the world by a selfless artist. In relation to anymals, Aaltola writes that we adhere to a self-directed notion of truth when we squeeze anymals into a system that suits ourselves; unsurprisingly the system's designators of value and profiteers coincide. This effect becomes even more visible, Aaltola points out, once we see that the higher the profit generated by using an anymal (in this case by producing 'pork'), the lower that anymal is ranked. Challenging this instrumentalised hierarchy of value would entail recognising anymals for who they are by diminishing human interests and "suspend[ing] all thought", as Weil would say. Murdoch introduces the term "unselfing" for this process, meaning to let reality take the

floor by acknowledging, as Aaltola puts it, "that others may be utterly dissimilar from the definitions we have created" ("Attention" 197). Our egos (Murdoch uses self and ego alternately) must cease to be and we must become empty in order to be able to receive the other.

Here again we find the idea (anticipated in the foreword of Uexküll's *Foray into the World of Animals and Humans*), that encountering anymals on their own terms is a matter of breaking down "barring convictions", not of lacking the equipment or devices necessary to enter anymal worlds. What, then, would it involve if we were to do away our convictions and give anymals our full attention, realising that they might be utterly dissimilar from our definitions? Many, perhaps even all, names, certainly stereotypes, some branches of taxonomy, and categorisations according to instrumentality, cuddliness, religion, and literary symbolism – all of these would have to go. Would we be able to do that? And, furthermore, what would we need in order to unburden our vision of reality of our self-directedness?

Murdoch claims that observing nature and art offer ways of overcoming an overbearingly present self in that they direct us beyond our preoccupations. She writes the following, for instance, about seeing a kestrel:

> Then suddenly I observe a hovering kestrel. In a moment everything is altered. The brooding self with its hurt vanity has disappeared. There is nothing now but kestrel. [We ought to] give attention to nature in order to clear our minds of selfish care. (qtd. in Aaltola 200)

Everything is altered, but not due to an act of will. The question of whether we would be able to do something, then, is less pertinent than the question of whether we are willing to submit ourselves to the view of the kestrel and refrain from action. In this passage, Murdoch conceives of the kestrel as completely separate from human interests. As such, the kestrel has the power to silence her human subjectivity – at least for a moment. Indeed, "[t]here is nothing now but kestrel." It is also important to mention here the unexpectedness that draws Murdoch out of her self, which emphasises the 'actionlessness' of attention. When looking at nature (Murdoch often alludes to birds in her novels[70]), it is apparently possible that one's selfhood can suddenly retreat. This is when reality can make its appearance.

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70 For more on Murdoch's birds, see Willemsen.

As I have remarked in chapter 4, 'reality' and 'truth' are thick philosophical concepts, carrying the whole of the history of philosophy with them. I would venture beyond the scope of this chapter were I to delve into how Murdoch, using Platonic terminology, reshapes the environment in which she thinks the words 'reality' and 'truth' have their proper place. For my line of thought, it is important to see that Murdoch deviates from an Aristotelian conception of truth as the agreement between thought and world and turns instead to a more spiritual take on truth as a purified, impersonal sight that gives the object under contemplation the best chance to show itself as it really is. "As it really is", then, means that the object is separate from any frame of mind or self that might distort or narrow its being. For Murdoch, then, the opposite of truth is an overly present self.

It is not only the observation of nature that can precipitate a process of unselfing, but the experience of art too. Aaltola only touches on the subject of the arts in Murdoch's and Weil's work, but I think that it would be safe to say that art, especially in Murdoch's work, is just as powerful a teacher as nature:

> It is important too that great art teaches us how real things can be looked at and loved without being seized and used, without being appropriated into the greedy organism of the self. This exercise of detachment is difficult and valuable whether the thing contemplated is a human being, or the root of a tree or the vibration of a colour or sound. Unsentimental contemplation of nature exhibits the same quality of detachment: selfish concerns vanish, nothing exists except the things which are seen. Beauty is that which attracts this particular sort of unselfish attention. It is obvious here what is the role for the artist or spectator, of exactness and objective vision: unsentimental, detached, unselfish objective attention. It is also clear that in moral situations a similar exactness is called for (Murdoch "'God'" 353).

Although Murdoch is Plato's apprentice in many ways, in this quotation she signals her profound disagreement with his estimation of art. Plato sees art as an obstacle in the search for truth; the images that art provides us are three steps from reality (*Republic*, Book 10, 595A-598D). Murdoch, by contrast, sees art as truth's main residence. In Plato's work truth is to be as abstract as possible: it is a void, only truly present in the ideal world of Forms, whereas in Murdoch's thought truth can be found in this muddled world. In Murdoch's philosophy, the abstract void shifted from being a characteristic of Plato's Idea of Truth to the ground for the artist's selfless vision.

In this respect, it is worth noting that Murdoch, like Carroll, discusses the painting *The Flaying of Marsyas* by Titian. Unlike Carroll, however, she priori-

tises the aesthetic experience of seeing the work over the questions of whether and the extent to which our emotions match up with figures depicted in the painting. Murdoch said she was "completely stunned" when she saw the painting ("Interview"), which she saw as "an expression of the death of the self" (Rowe 72). Yet at the same time, Murdoch lifts Marsyas' agony to a shared perspective: "the God flays you [and] you lose your egoism in this sort of agony, which is also ecstasy" (qtd. in Rowe 72). The notion of "ecstasy" seems out of place in such a gruesome scene. Still, Murdoch uses the word because she has seen that Marsyas' complexion is one of serenity and ecstasy. Murdoch's comments stand in stark contrast to Carroll's evaluation, which I have discussed in section 5.2. This is due to the fact that Carroll prioritises the default definition of empathy, which results in a meagre understanding of the boundaries of our potential for empathic engagement. Murdoch uses the pronoun "you" because she expects the viewer to be able to absorb the painting and vicariously undergo Marsyas' flaying. Of course, as viewers we do not suffer in the same way as Marsyas, but the spectator's every flinch is part of a greater experience in which it suffices to be selflessly attentive to come to know what it is like to be him on a deeper level.

For Murdoch, artists such as Titian display a "particular sort of unselfish attention" and thus unveil truth, a concept that coincides with morality in Murdoch's philosophy, following Plato ("Sovereignty" 64). Seeing the truth about something or someone means that you can act towards them in one way and no other. Murdoch diverges from Plato, however, in taking the arts as the eminent device by which we might train ourselves in truthful vision. Hence, although art should not have an appointed moral duty – its educational power has to be seen as a by-product. Still, art is not to be considered frivolous, something we can do without.

Artworks centring on anymals are sometimes ascribed merely a symbolic function (as Elizabeth Atkins has observed, this was the case before the onset of modernism in poetry at the beginning of the twentieth century) There are few spaces in the world in which human animals can meet anymals without drawing them into an anthropomorphised framework. One might say that it is better to meet them in reality than in art, but in our world their presence is mostly mediated through some kind of human structure. The worst example of this may be a zoo, but also in a forest or at home we also see them in and through settings provided by humans. Zoopoetry, like other art forms (Murdoch predominantly speaks about paintings), offers us a space in which anymals can be met on their own terms. That is to say that zoopoetry is written in a human language, but is aware of the 'grammar' and images that constrain how anymals are represented. In zoopoetry anymals are presented by authors

and encountered by readers as selflessly as possible, mainly due to zoopoetical tools that shape our attention.

We can see the difference between selfless and selfish literature on anymals when we realise that there are not only societal systems of "seizing and using" anymals, but also literary equivalents of selfishness ("Sovereignty" 353). Romanticism provides Murdoch with her main example of selfishness in the arts:

> We may notice, that with the dominance of what I have called neurotic Romantic literature the real individual has tended to disappear from the novel and his place has been taken by the symbolic individual who *is* the literary work itself ... What we recall is the author himself, or else something very significant about him. ("Sublime and the Beautiful" 280)

In contrast to the Romantic writer, Murdoch claims that "a great novelist is essentially tolerant, that is, displays a real apprehension of persons other than the author as having a right to exist and to have a separate mode of being which is important and interesting to themselves". At another moment she calls characters in great novels "free" and "independent of their author" ("Sublime and the Beautiful" 271, 271). The more 'other' they are allowed to be, the more 'real' they become. For Murdoch, the selfless eye is an "unsentimental, detached, unselfish and objective [form of] attention" ("Sovereignty" 65). This selfless attention results in a vision that consists solely of "the things which are seen", such as the hovering kestrel, which is nothing but that hovering kestrel.

The sight of the kestrel as it is constitutes a moment of truth. Truth is obtained in the selfless presentation of the object under contemplation. Note that this notion of truth, like Heidegger's, has little to do with the correspondence between thought and thing. Furthermore, Murdoch emphasises the writer's "tolerance" in the quotation above because characters in a novel need to be able to live a life that is separate from that of the writer. In this sense, a presentation of otherness is a gauge of selflessness. Along these lines, I think that seeing anymals as they really are requires acknowledging their 'otherness'. As the outcome of the author's tolerance, otherness should be understood as 'alterity' so as to avoid tolerance's connotation of permissive indifference. Recognising anymals' otherness does not imply that they are 'too other' to understand. Instead, the notion of alterity acknowledges that someone's individuality always somehow slips away from our comprehension, which cannot encompass their whole being. Here it makes sense to refer to Emmanuel Levinas, who writes 'Other' with a capital o (although he does not use this concept

of alterity in the context of anymals).[71] Recognising the alterity of anymals does not imply that they are fundamentally different to humans; they are not different as such, but only in specific respects, determined by the particular point on which we chose to draw comparisons, as with other humans. Calling anymals 'Other' means that they are irreducible to a particular conceptualisation, because their individuality resists being seized and used (Murdoch, "'God'" 353).

This resistance, however, can only be recognised when, with an unselfish eye, we try to see that they have their own worlds, intentions, likes, and dislikes. According to Murdoch, an unselfish eye can be trained by looking at small, almost invisible things, as she explains in the context of a treatment of Buddhism and Weil:

> [A] contemplative observation of contingent 'trivial' detail (insects, leaves, shapes of screwed-up paper, looks and shadows of anything, expressions of faces) is a prevalent and usually, in a minimal sense, 'unselfing' activity of consciousness. (*Metaphysics* 245)

Paying attention to these trivial details nurtures our selfless vision because they are very hard to "seize and use" in that they usually have no function and hardly any meaning for us (Murdoch, "'God'" 353). It is difficult, therefore, to attend to "trivial" details. We are used to hastening our perception, to look for what is useful and try to fit what we see into a bigger picture. These forms of filtering and ranking what we see must come to an end by way of a process of unselfing.

In the final stage in this process, which shows how art and morality coincide in Murdoch's work, we see the other as an individual. This may sound easy but in fact it is immensely difficult. Both Weil and Murdoch think that this stage of unselfing is best described as love. As Murdoch puts it, "Love is the perception of individuals. Love is the extremely difficult realisation that something other than oneself is real" ("Sublime and the Good" 215). This realisation is difficult because our egos crave solace, a consolation that makes us feel good and which we subsequently mistake for love. According to Weil and Murdoch, however, love is ultimately the room given by the subject.

It might be especially hard to see others' individuality when anymals are the others in question and people do not often encounter them. Anymals are not only representatives of a certain group; their existence cannot be neatly

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71 See Levinas for an explanation of "the alterity of the Other" (30). The reasons that Levinas excludes anymals from the moral realm fall beyond the scope of this study.

explicated by naming the species to which they belong. In following Murdoch, I would argue that a selfless view of anymals can be trained not only by meeting them, but also by experiencing art. Singling out one specific cow in a painting, for instance, and paying attention to her muscles, posture, gaze, and the blotchy pattern of her coat, calls for a specific attitude on the part of both the painter and viewers. This attitude would recognise that this cow is neither one among many, there for her milk or meat, nor used in any other sense. Instead, she simply abides there as the object of attention – resisting any system of appropriation.

The conscious, separate self, which is required for the matching of emotions according to the interpersonal definition of empathy, is discarded here, and we can already see that building a definition of zoopoetical empathy by way of Weil's and Murdoch's concept of attention brings us close to Eileen John's observations. In terms of the empathy debate, Weil and Murdoch do not set projection and empathy in opposition to one another. For them, the key clash is rather that between the projection that results from an overbearing self and a selfless vision of reality. It is hard to place an instance of the experience of there being "nothing now but kestrel" in terms of the empathy debate. Perhaps it would best be described as a form of emotional contagion, in that the spectator and the kestrel seem to fuse. Then again, we do not know the kestrel's emotions. Actually, it is impossible to conceptualise the experience of letting the kestrel's whole unappropriated reality take over one's being, whilst still preserving its alterity, within the limits of the interpersonal definition of empathy.

Unselfing offers an alternative for the fruitless, though much-discussed notion that empathy must be accurate in that it involves the matching up of emotions. The experience of "nothing but kestrel" could, however, be accounted for in either the Buddhist tradition or phenomenological philosophy, to which Murdoch's and Weil's thought relate. As I argued in chapter 1, the school of phenomenology has the edge when it comes to discarding Cartesian binaries. A phenomenological perspective clears the way for the anymal as a whole to come into view. In turn, selfless attention, as Weil and Murdoch understand it, explicates what is required of the observer when considering anymals. In becoming selflessly attentive, observers take a final step in breaking down the convictions that impede their ability to see anymals as a whole. It is only possible to upholding the idea of empathic accuracy by holding onto these binaries. A phenomenological account of anymals and the observer's selfless attention replaces empathic accuracy with perceptive accuracy.

Remarkably enough, current definitions of empathy as discussed in chapter 1 simultaneously consider empathic accuracy to be a prerequisite for empathy and unattainable. We cannot determine conclusively the degree to which we

are projecting empathetic emotions onto other selves and whether our emotions match the other's. Furthermore, we do not know how closely they must match; too much resemblance might mean that I would lose myself, whereas too little means that I do not feel what you feel. Finally, we do not know what it is that must match: would matching among different emotions be sufficient? Must we rather have vectors joining comparable emotions, as Carroll argues? Or should we match in regard to one specific emotion?

The process of the self receding and making room for the other's alterity, by contrast, evades the intricate matter of there needing to be a complete (or nearly complete) matching of emotions. In the case of cognitive empathy, it also circumvents the need to reconstruct a narrative accurately. Selfless attention, the outcome of trained 'unselfing', indicates that accuracy is rather a matter of allowing the other to be present as a whole. Accurate empathy that lets go of the demand for distinct matching selves (based on faulty Cartesian assumptions) is selfless attention. Moreover, for Murdoch, selfless attention is what marks good artists, be they novelists, poets, painters, or creators of other kinds. In her view, it is also the standard for evaluating works of art and comprises the ideal attitude of the onlooker.

Let me summarise the key aspects of the selfless attention produced through a process of unselfing:

1. Selfless attention avoids the intricate opposition of projection and empathy by foregrounding the other and backgrounding the self;
2. Selfless attention stems from the difficult realisation that someone or something else might differ significantly from one's interpretation of them;
3. This realisation often happens suddenly and befalls the subject; and
4. Selfless attention presupposes an essential separateness and acknowledges the other's individuality. This process is best described as love.

As I wrote in the introduction, these aspects lead us to a better understanding of zoopoetical empathy, which I explore in the next chapter. Although they are inseparable, I nevertheless relate each of these aspects to a different poet. I begin with Elizabeth Bishop's poetics and poetry, which are best connected to the first aspect. I then discuss the poems and poetics of Ted Hughes, whose work is best explained in relation to the second and third aspects. That said, I discuss the second aspect more comprehensively with regard to the poetry of Les Murray. I connect the final aspect to the poems and poetics of Frederike Harmsen van Beek, Judith Beveridge, and Mary Oliver. These poets show how coming closer to anymals necessarily involves some or all of these aspects, for the zoopoetical tools they use are all aimed (to a greater or lesser extent) at

silencing human subjectivity. In their poetics, these poets sometimes describe the know-how involved in achieving that. They describe what is needed to embed the poet's attitude in a poem. Alongside their poems, I therefore have discussed their poetics, which become quite specific when dealing with anymals.

These aspects do not amount to a pre-given definition of empathy; they rather come to the fore when studying zoopoetry and are systematically evaluated in Weil and Murdoch through the lens of selfless attention. Specifically, the evaluation of zoopoetry benefits from Weil's and Murdoch's concepts and distinctions, for their work allows us to explain how we are able to feel with an anymal in poetry without reducing its otherness. Rather than offering a fixed definition, then, the aspects of selfless attention that I have enumerated above point the way for a more fruitful way of thinking about the relation between zoopoetry and empathy. My hope is that the poems embody the relevance of selfless attention for formulating a definition of zoopoetical empathy.

6

FOUR POETIC CASE STUDIES

6.1 "Empathy (is it?)": Elizabeth Bishop's vast zoopoetics

6.1.1 Patience and selflessness in and through "The Moose" and "The Fish"

Of the poets whom I discuss in this chapter, Elizabeth Bishop's approach to empathy and identification comes closest to Simone Weil's and Iris Murdoch's. Even on the level of her choice of words, Bishop's poetics express the same mission – namely that of overcoming an all-too-present self – and show an urge to achieve a clear vision of the other, which can be best connected to the first of the aspects of selfless attention that I listed in the previous chapter: "Selfless attention avoids the intricate opposition of projection and empathy by foregrounding the other and backgrounding the self".

The influence of Weil's work on Bishop's poetics is direct; Bishop read Weil in 1953 and alludes to her work several times in letters and essays. [72] It may even be because of Weil's influence that we read about the "selfless artist" in one of Bishop's letters, which has subsequently become famous and is now known as her "Darwin letter". One of Bishop's favourite poets was George Herbert and she read that Weil knew one of his poems, "Love", by heart (*Poems* 702). It is important to note, here, that the poem offers an abridged version of Weil's notion of attention. Indeed, the poem tells of how Love waits for a sinner and creates a safe place for him to rest. The sinner feels unworthy of Love's kindness, but Love persuades them to "sit and eat" (final line, Herbert). Waiting and the creation of resting places are also leading themes in Bishop's poetics. Indeed, she writes about waiting patiently for a poem to finish. Bishop explains the necessity of patience in an interview:

> One of the few good qualities I think I have as a poet is patience. I have endless patience. Sometimes I feel I should be angry at myself for being willing to wait 20 years for a poem to get finished, but I don't think a good poet can afford to be in a rush. (Johnson 99)[73]

In addition to patience, poets cannot do without selflessness, according to Bishop. Like in Herbert's poem, patience and selflessness are connected qualities, for it may take time for objects under contemplation to show themselves in full. Weil's influence is particularly visible in this regard. Bishop's interpretation of selflessness, as well as the emphasis that she puts on it in her poetics, is thoroughly Weilian. Selflessness comes to the fore in a most appreciative way in her review of the work of Marianne Moore, her much-admired tutor. "Does it come simply from her gift of being able to give herself up entirely to the object under contemplation," Bishop asks, "to feel in all sincerity how it is to be *it*?" ("As We Like It" 682).

It is not just that the characteristics of selfless attention in Bishop's work are comparable to those of Weil and Murdoch; the two thinkers' views on how unselfing must be trained also resonates with Bishop's writing. Much like Murdoch's remarks on "trivial things", Bishop underscores the need to pay attention to small things. Her work addresses the related qualities of patience

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72 Bishop makes a number of references to Weil's work. In 1953 she writes the following in a letter to Marianne Moore: "I'm also reading Simone Weil after staving it off for several years – the mysticism often repels – and then suddenly she says something quite amazing & so simple you wonder why no one ever said it before (*One Art* 257). We can infer that Bishop read a specific "Farewell Letter", in which Weil refers to a translation of Herbert's "Love" and having a mystical experience of finding Christ. In this letter, Weil writes that she learnt "Love" by heart and adds the translation of the poem to the letter. Bishop writes about this translation in a letter to Joseph Summers of 1954: "Did you know – you probably do – that Simone Weil in one of her "Farewell Letters" tells how she 'found Christ,' I think – while reciting 'Love bade me welcome yet my soul drew back'? I'd like to see her translation of it" (*One Art* 295). Bishop makes a mistake here in that this was not Weil's own translation (perhaps due to the English publication). In any case, we know that Bishop read this specific "Farewell Letter", in which the central themes of Weil's thought culminate in the poem. Another allusion to Weil is found in Bishop's literary statement "I was Just But Awake" of 1958, in which she again refers to Herbert's "Love" as "the one that meant so much to Weil". There is also her literary statement "Writing Poetry is an Unnatural Act" from the late 50s or early 60s, in which she quotes the first and last lines of "Love" before writing, again entertaining the erroneous idea that Weil herself translated the poem "This, I later discovered in *Waiting for God*, was Simone Weil's favorite; she translated it and knew it by heart". In 1964, eleven years after her first encounter with Weil's work, Bishop mentions Weil again in a letter to Anne Stevenson, describing her as someone whom she enjoys reading (*Poems* 699, 702, 861).

73 Because this quotation is from a 1978 interview with Alexandra Johnson, it is certainly possible that Bishop had her poem "The Moose" in mind, which took her even longer than twenty years to finish. She told Elizabeth Spires about not being able to finish the poem depicting a bus trip that she took from Nova Scotia to Boston, saying that "I could never seem to get the middle part, to get from one place to the other". Bishop began writing "The Moose" in 1946, when she was in her thirties. She had to finish the poem when she chose to include it in her "Phi Beta Kappa" reading at Harvard in 1972. This is only a few years before she died in 1979 (Spires 117, 118).

and selflessness in the context of encounters with anymals. In her poem "The Moose" Bishop patiently waits for the stanzas that enable her to finally show the moose and the italicised 'it' in the quotation above refers to a small dog that comes into full view thanks to Moore's selflessness. Indeed, Bishop writes that she appreciated the philosopher John Dewey and Marianne Moore because they also "loved little things, small plants and weeds and animals" (Brown 27). According to Bishop, the potential vices of poets writing about anymals all stem from to an overly present self, which distorts reality, whether by pastoralising, romanticising, or sentimentalising anymals, or using them to teach the reader a moral lesson.[74] All of these forms of 'selfishness' constitute ways of keeping anymals out of sight, since they divert the attention from the anymal to the writer or moral lesson.[75]

Bishop's poem "The Moose" exhibits the opposite of selfishness. The first stanzas in the autobiographical poem give the reader a cinematographic view of the landscape: we can see the river and bay, the setting of the sun, and gravelly roads, all from a bird's eye point of view. After this panoramic sweep, we zero in; the sentence that began with the first line "From narrow provinces" finally ends with an image of a bus that "journeys west" in line 26. From the moment that the bus is introduced, we read as if keeping pace with the bus: "down hollows, up rises / and waits, patient" (lines 31-32). Thanks to the commas and caesura, the narrated time and narration of time coincide. This brings Elizabeth Spires to tell Bishop that this "is such a dreamy poem, it seems to move the way a bus moves" (Spires 117). For some stanzas we ride through provinces along with the bus and see thumbnail sketches of domestic life. The poem counts twenty-eight stanzas of six lines each, which makes it one of Bishop's longest poems. An 'experiencer' is only introduced in the thirteenth stanza – not in the first-person singular, but in the first-person plural:

> A woman climbs in
> with two market bags,
> brisk, freckled, elderly.
> "A grand night. Yes, sir,
> all the way to Boston."
> She regards *us* amicably. (171 ll. 73-78; my emphasis)

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74 For instance, in a letter to a fan (a certain "Miss Pierson" who had sought Bishop's advice about writing poetry) Bishop writes: "If you feel you are moralizing too much – just cut the morals off – or out. (Quite often young poets tend to try to tie everything up neatly in 2 or 3 beautiful last lines, and it is quite surprising how the poems are improved if the poet can bear to sacrifice those last, pat, beautiful lines)" (*One Art* 596).

75 For further analysis, see my thesis, Brüggemann "Turning".

One would expect the speaker to adopt a first-person singular voice here, not least because Bishop herself emphasised that the poem was autobiographical and that "the events of the poem were 'all true'" on several occasions (qtd. in Millier 466). It seems remarkable that the speaker herself is absent from this autobiographical poem; even the first-person plural appears only a few times. My point is not that a human mode of experience is absent here, since a conversation full of human interest is overheard in the following stanzas (the conversation has to do with someone who is taking to drink, someone else who is losing his mind, and someone else who has lost a son). I only mean to draw attention to how images of the experiences seem afloat in the bus, as if it were a dream (as Spires perceived), in which it is not clear who is having the experiences.

The absence of an 'I' in an autobiographical poem may seem remarkable at first, but on second thought it may not be so strange. In fact, "The Moose" exemplifies what could be called the two Bishopian virtues of good poetry: selflessness and patience. Bishop told the aforementioned Spires that she had to wait patiently for the middle part of the poem to form in her imagination before she could finish the poem; likewise the reader has to wait for the entrance of the protagonist: the moose. When riding with the passengers in the bus and overhearing their conversations, one almost forgets that there surely has to be a moose in a poem called "The Moose". Although they may be unaware of it, the reader has been waiting twenty-two stanzas before the moose makes her appearance. In Bishop's poetics it is possible to write an autobiographical poem in which the 'I' is almost absent, in that Bishop regards not herself but the encounter with the moose as important. This, of course, is reminiscent of the zoopoetical tool of the pronoun drop: the speaker gives herself up in order to contemplate the moose. Patience and the absence of an 'I' pave the way for the moose to show herself in a slow, moose-like way: "she stands there, looms, rather" (line 139). The grammar loosens and comes to resemble the moose's movement. Readers have to slow their reading pace accordingly. The passengers venture their observations and judgements: the moose is "perfectly harmless", a "big creature", a "she", and "awful plain". Impervious to these remarks, the moose remains "grand" and "otherworldly" until she walks out of sight.

The moose's otherworldliness may remind us of a similar moment in "The Fish", another famous zoopoem by Bishop:

I looked into his eyes
which were far larger than mine
but shallower, and yellowed,
the irises backed and packed
with tarnished tinfoil
seen through the lenses
of old scratched isinglass.
They shifted a little, but not
to return my stare.
- It was more like the tipping
of an object toward the light. (42-43, ll. 34-44)

"The Fish" is a free verse poem of seventy-six lines in which a speaker catches a fish and holds him in her attention. The speaker comes close to the fish through her observations, yet backs away when looking into his eyes. When looking someone in the eye, we assume that we are closely connected with them. Here however the speaker shies away from the danger of projection. The fish cannot be sacrificed to any ideas or feelings on the part of the onlooker. The 'I' is mentioned in the poem, but in combination with verbs aimed at the fish, such as "saw", "stared" and "admired".

and then I saw
that from his lower lip
—if you could call it a lip—
grim, wet, and weaponlike,
hung five old pieces of fish-line,
or four and a wire leader
with the swivel still attached,
with all their five big hooks
grown firmly in his mouth.
A green line, frayed at the end
where he broke it, two heavier lines,
and a fine black thread
still crimped from the strain and snap
when it broke and he got away.
Like medals with their ribbons
frayed and wavering,
a five-haired beard of wisdom
trailing from his aching jaw. (43, ll. 47-64)

Even the fish-lines and the wire leader are patiently described. They are part of the fish's history, which is presented as a flashback through the many descriptions of the wires: they are frayed, crimped, having come under "strain" and eventually "snapped". Alliterating the 's' sound in "strain" and "snap" intensifies the experience of the fish-line breaking. The "snap" is followed by an enjambment, which makes the word even more onomatopoeic. The fish appears to have been caught by anglers at least five times and survived each of these encounters. It is important to pay attention to the seemingly thoughtless shift of perspective in line 64. Here, the outcome of so many observations is that so-called 'private experience' becomes suddenly observable. This makes "aching" a commingling word. The 'I' hesitates about calling the lip of the fish a lip, but there is no hesitation whatsoever when it comes to calling the jaw an aching jaw. True to Bishop's own poetics, this aching jaw shows us that the 'I' stares at the fish with a completely selfless gaze.

Bishop has more than once remarked on what she deems the erroneous use of animals as symbols or stand-ins in literature. I referred to her aversion to the use of metaphors in chapter 3 when Bishop writes that:

> It was perhaps consoling and popular to think that the animals were just like the citizenry, but how untrue, and one feels ... how selfish. There are morals a'plenty in animal life, but they have to be studied out by devotedly and minutely observing the animal, not by regarding the deer as a man imprisoned in a "leathern coat". (*Poems* 686)

The reason for her reluctance, which is very Murdochian, is that using anymals in a metaphor is a form of selfishness. Also reminiscent of Murdoch is Bishop's mention of how we seek consolation in using metaphors. As she writes of May Swenson's poetry: "Miss Swenson is one of the few good poets who write good poems about nature, and really about nature, not just to compare it to states of mind or society" ("May" 734). In the first quotation, we read again that selfishness, in the form of using animals as a stand-in for a moral lesson, is what hinders seeing – in this case, seeing the deer as a deer. In the second, we can see that comparing animals to states of mind or society is a form of selfishness. Through an emphasis on attention, Bishop sets up an opposition between projection and reality instead of between projection and empathy. Seeing new oppositions may be difficult, but in Bishop's work truth is the opposite of selfishness, as it is for Weil and Murdoch. This is because truth does not mean accordance between thought and world; it is rather a presentation of the thing itself, stripped of any interests on the part of the onlooker. Backgrounding the

self, which happens in Bishop's poetry, therefore, foregrounds the other, allowing us to perceive them truthfully.

6.1.2 Selfless empathy in Bishop's poetics

Like Murdoch, Bishop takes selfishness to lead to untruthful writing. In contrast, Bishop mentions the selfless writing of Marianne Moore who establishes a true image of the anymal as anymal and connects us to the real world. In addition to using selflessness as an aesthetic standard for her poetry, Bishop describes an instance of selfless attention in her essay "Time's Andromedas". In this essay, she thinks about the relation between time and novels, before unfolding a string of minute observations of swarming birds:

> [B]y watching one bird, then another, I saw that some flew a little slower than others, some were trying to get ahead and some flew at an individual rubato; each seemed a variation, and yet altogether my eyes were deceived in thinking them all precise and regular... infinitely more important was that impression the birds had given to me of having set up a time-pattern of their own, of having brought down the very sky and fused it with them in an absorption in their motions that left the other parts of sky and the lower world to move at a quite different clock-pace. ("Time's Andromedas" 642-643)

Bishop sees the birds, follows their individual flight patterns, and is even drawn out of herself. She perceives a time-pattern all of their own, beyond the human, yet palpable in the rhythm of the sentence "brought down the sky and fused it with them". Bishop then relates the birds' time-pattern with one's experience of time when reading a novel, in which a different clock-pace takes over when you get carried away with the story:

> Within the invisible boundaries of the flying birds everything became theirs: the spaces between them, the time used and lapsing between them, my own momentary sense of time, looking up at them, were theirs. ("Time's Andromedas" 644)

The birds' time-pattern takes over and Bishop does not hesitate to write that her temporal experience fused with their time-pattern. This moment is comparable with Murdoch's view of the kestrel, in which the kestrel takes over to such an extent that eventually there is nothing but kestrel. Perhaps Bishop even

goes further in the process of unselfing: she lets the rhythm draw herself and the reader out of human clock-pace. This resonates with the hesitations about the status of Murdoch's observations of the kestrel in the empathy debate, in that we might wonder whether Bishop's bird watching could be an instance of empathy. Neither Bishop attending to birds nor Murdoch sighting the kestrel would pass for an instance of empathy on the default definition, for what would be the matching?

Yet the bird's flight patterns resonate in us – something that we would never have picked up on had we put the interpersonal definition first and then tested Bishop's description of the bird's flight pattern against it. The bird watching, in which Bishop forgets herself, is an exercise in doing away with standard categorisations, in seeing reality outside of human frames of reference. Bishop's voice is there: she uses an "I" and writes that "my eyes were deceived". Her presence is impersonal, though, by which I mean that although the writing is focalised through her, she is important only in as far as her being there makes observations possible. Instead of wondering about matching, Bishop promotes selflessness and patience as the prerequisites for identification or empathy. Her work exemplifies how one might do away with Uexküll's "barring convictions". Bishop contemplates birds in a way that does without classifications, categorisations, and stereotypes. This practice, it seems to me, is difficult. It is the eye of someone who does not seek correspondences but is prepared to learn and see afresh.

Whereas Murdoch blames Romanticism specifically for blurring our vision of reality, Bishop sees that anymals are also lost out from view because they are pastoralised, symbolised, and sentimentalised, as I wrote at the beginning of this chapter.[76] Recall the phrase with which Bishop praised Moore: "Does it come simply from her gift of being able to give herself up entirely to the object under contemplation, to feel in all sincerity how it is to be *it*" ("As We Like It" 682). Here again we recognise both patience (contemplation) and selflessness (giving oneself up). Together, these two values ensure that the reader can feel in all sincerity how it is to be "it". "To feel how it is to be it" may be a way of describing identification, but we haven't come across Bishop's prerequisites for getting there in the empathy debate. In the following passage Bishop puts forward her own idea of what identification might entail:

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76 For an analysis of Bishop's disapproval of these attitudes towards anymals, see thesis, Brüggemann "Turning".

> I have experienced it [identification] in listening to the noise made by a four year old child who could imitate exactly the sound of the water running out of his bath. Long, fine thorough passages of descriptive prose fail to produce it, but sometimes animal or bird masks at the Museums of Natural History give one (as the dances that once went with them might have been able to do) the same immediacy of identification one feels when reading about Miss Moore's small dog. ("As We Like It" 682)

This passage concludes a few sentences later with the sentence in which Bishop praises Moore that I quoted above. We can conclude from this that the immediacy of identification – the how it feels in all sincerity to be it – is due to Moore's gift of giving herself up. It would seem that identification and selflessness are internally linked. The example of anymal masks is telling in this regard. Bishop does not refer to one specific museum, but given that she lived in New York in the 30s, when she wrote "As We Like It", she might well have had in mind the masks reproduced below, which are held in the American Museum of Natural History.[77]

Worn on one's face or head, these masks are meant to bring the wearer into contact with an anymal spirit. Like any mask, it is meant to endow the wearer with another identity instantly. According to Bishop, this shift in perspective has the same effect as a poem by Marianne Moore. In other words: you give yourself up in order to foreground the other – in this case, the eagle or wolf.

The notions of giving oneself up, selflessness, and patience are all related in Bishop's vocabulary. To her they are the ingredients of identification, an experience that is apparently not affected by the extent to which empathiser and target are similar; anything is possible. One can deduce that she considers identification and empathy interchangeable from the following excerpt from a letter, which she wrote to Anne Stevenson:

> Dreams, works of art (some), glimpses of the always-more-successful surrealism of everyday life, unexpected moments of empathy (is it?), catch a peripheral vision of whatever it is one can never really see full-face but that seems enormously important. I can't believe we're wholly irrational – and I do admire Darwin! But reading Darwin, one admires the beautiful solid case being built out of his endless heroic observations, almost unconscious

77 These masks have been part of the collection since 1896 (eagle mask) and 1900 (wolf mask), as Kathryn Sabella, researcher at the American Museum of Natural History, confirmed in an email to me of 3 August 2020. It is certainly possible, then, that Bishop saw these specific masks.

Eagle Mask. Collection of AMoNH

Wolf Mask. Collection of AMoNH

> or automatic – and then comes a sudden relaxation, a forgetful phrase, and one feels the strangeness of his undertaking, sees the lonely man, his eyes fixed on facts and minute details, sinking or sliding giddily off into the unknown. What one seems to want in art, in experiencing it, is the same thing that is necessary for its creation, a self-forgetful, perfectly useless concentration. (*Poems* 861)

A lot has been said about this section of Bishop's famous so-called "Darwin-letter", which conveys so many aspects of Bishop's poetics. What is important for my argument is how she underlines the need for thorough observation on the part of artists and biologists. Indeed, just a few paragraphs earlier in the same letter, Bishop states rather firmly that a "lack of observation [seems to me] one of the cardinal sins, responsible for so much cruelty, ugliness, dullness, bad manners – and general unhappiness too" (*Poems* 860). By contrast, Darwin, in Bishop's estimation, is a hero of observation who builds a solid case out of his endless fixation on details and nothing else. And when Bishop reads a forgetful phrase in between all of these observations, a process of identification is put into motion: "one *feels* the strangeness of his undertaking and one *sees* the lonely man". This process is very similar to those that she describes in relation to anymal masks.

Although the letter – specifically the paragraph that I have just quoted and its final sentence in particular – are much discussed, the concept of selflessness is given little attention. Yet Bishop mentions the concept several times in different wordings: Darwin's observations are "unconscious" and "automatic", he writes a "forgetful phrase", and the summarising final phrase mentions "self-forgetful" concentration. It is precisely because Darwin is "self-forgetful", along with his "perfectly useless concentration", that one is able to identify with him whilst Darwin gives himself over to the objects of his contemplation.[78] This identification with Darwin may not count as an instance of empathy in the traditional sense; indeed, Bishop herself qualifies her use of the term with a parenthetical "is it"? However, if we take the 'self' out of the definition of empathy, like Bishop, then accurate empathy becomes accurate vision. We readers can experience Bishop's poetics in action when we engage in her imagining: we see Darwin as a young man, noting and observing things self-forgetfully. When we take our own 'selves' out of the equation, the question as to whether we are experiencing emotions matching up with Darwin's

78 Note here how this letter is in line with Bishop's ponderings on her poetics, which I mentioned in chapter 1. In her letter to Donald Stanford, Bishop writes that they are the automatic, involuntary hiccups and coughs that one enables to feel with someone else (see footnote 21).

emotions "somewhat", vectorially converging emotions, or the exactly the same emotions, becomes moot.

Finally, as a last move in the paragraph, Bishop claims that "a self-forgetful, perfectly useless concentration" is what one wants in art. In making this last point, she shifts her focus from the vocation of the biologist to the arts. For Bishop there is little difference between biology and art in regard to their enabling source, which is selflessness. This is what makes the final shift possible; both the biologist and the artist draw the experiencer into a selfless view of what is under contemplation, be it a fish, moose, or the sound of water running out of a bath.

Bishop's poetics bear a striking resemblance, therefore, to Murdoch's description of the task of both the artist and spectator, namely "exactness and objective vision: unsentimental, detached, unselfish objective attention" ("Sovereignty" 65-66). Accurate perception is considered more important than accurate emotional matching, which is why Bishop can use commingling words in her description of Darwin ("the *lonely* man", "the *strangeness* of his undertaking"). This strand of thinking about feeling with someone or something may be unfamiliar and uncommon in the context of the empathy debate. Yet this is what comes to the fore when the arts are put first. What becomes clear is that selfless attention avoids the intricate opposition of projection versus empathy by foregrounding the other and backgrounding the self. In avoiding this opposition, we can account for instances in which we experience a perspective shift or vicariously feel a movement or mood, but dare not name it empathy. What comes to the fore is an idea of empathy that is like interpersonal empathy in that it stands in opposition to projection, but deviates from interpersonal empathy in that it entails the diminution of the self. Empathy, here, is not an all-or-nothing experience of matching selves. Unselfish seeing or observation – trained through the experience of art or nature – becomes the key to grasping the foundations of zoopoetical empathy.

6.2 "See it and live it... Turn yourself into it": Capturing anymals with Ted Hughes

6.2.1 A fox and horses enjoying a life of their own

In the chapter on zoopoetical tools I referred to Ted Hughes' poetics, in which he states that a poem is like an anymal: "an assembly of living parts moved by a single spirit" (*Handbook* 17). This remark is from the first chapter, "Capturing Animals", of *Poetry in the Making: A Handbook for Writing and Teaching*, in which Hughes presents his poetics and ways of teaching poetry to students in secondary school. A fervent anymal catcher in his youth, Hughes tells us that his interests changed when he "began to look at them ... from their point of view" (16). He then started to write poems, which gave him a similar satisfaction:

> I think of poems as a sort of animal. They have their own life, like animals, by which I mean that they seem quite separate from any person, even from their author ... Maybe my concern has been to capture not animals particularly and not poems, but simply things which have a vivid life of their own.[79] (*Handbook* 15)

The idea that poems are like anymals touches on the intuitive connection between poetry and anymals, which was also expressed by Jacques Derrida (see chapter 4). To Hughes, the link between anymals and poetry lies in their both having "a vivid life of their own" (15). This statement reveals the boundaries of

79 In this quotation Hughes also refutes the idea that poetic figures of anymals are necessarily anthropomorphised. His idea of anymals having a life of their own, separate even from their author, resembles Murdoch's conviction that great authors are tolerant ("Sublime and the Beautiful" 271; "Literature" 29-30). They also counter Singer's idea that for novelists it is easy to empathise with their characters, for the reason that they are invented by them (see chapter 3).

our thinking: there is something that we cannot grasp; our thinking is shaken by something that resists being explained, rationalised, or defined. Hughes approaches this resistance by stressing that anymals and poems "have their own life". What is more, "they have a certain wisdom" (*Handbook* 15).

"They have their own life" describes anymals' resistance to being translated into language – whether scientific or otherwise – without remainder. Poetic language, however, presents the greatest chance for both granting them lives of their own whilst 'capturing' them. Comparing anymals with poetry, like Hughes in "Capturing Animals", reinforces the conviction that reading a poem is not about interpreting it, but about partaking in it, experiencing it. Readers and even writers encounter these autonomous lives, often in a moment of sudden realisation. Hughes explains this idea whilst referring to his own poem "The Thought-Fox":

I imagine this midnight moment's forest:
Something else is alive
Beside the clock's loneliness
And this blank page where my fingers move,

Through the window I see no star:
Something more near
Through deeper darkness
Is entering the loneliness:

Cold, delicately as the dark snow,
A fox's nose touches twig, leaf;
Two eyes serve a movement, that now
And again now, and now, and now

Sets neat prints into the snow
Between trees, and warily lame
Shadow lags by stump and in hollow
Of a body that is bold to come

Across clearings, an eye,
A widening deepening greenness,
Brilliantly, concentratedly,
Coming about its own business

> Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox
> It enters the dark hole of the head.
> The window is starless still; the clock ticks,
> The page is printed. (*Handbook* 19-20 ll. 1-24)

Hughes leaves no doubt about where the poem begins: "I imagine", he writes in the first line. The thought fox comes alive, then, in the mind of the speaker. However, the speaker's view does not lessen the fox's reality, for he is alive in the imagined "midnight moment's forest". To establish the fox's reality, Hughes uses various zoopoetical tools: there is a pseudo-pronoun drop at the beginning of the fourth stanza, beginning with "Sets". We assume that it is the fox that sets his prints in the snow, but in fact it is the "movement" that does this, which drives the fox as subject out of view. The pseudo-pronoun drop enables Hughes to avoid the burden of having to prove that the fox exists as a whole 'self' and let the reader focus on the fox's action instead. Thanks to the monosyllabic nouns, the nose that touches twig and leaf is almost audible and tactile for the reader. The words "bold" in line 12 and "concentratedly" in line 15 are commingling words, since they assume the fox to be a lived body and therefore make the fox's experience visible.

The most impressive way of foregrounding the fox, however, is through the poetic equivalent of the claire-obscure technique. The blank page is contrasted with the darkness of the night sky and still darker atmosphere of the woods. These form the background against which we envision the blank page and foreground the brilliant fox setting its paws in the white snow. The foregrounding is accentuated even more by way of a slight change in rhythm in line 5. Like the introduction of the dog's perspective in Joke van Leeuwen's "Other People's Dog", the fox's entrance is prompted by a spondee: "cold, delicately".

Like Bishop, Hughes foregrounds the anymal by backgrounding the self. Otherworldly in its mysteriousness, the fox is just there, until it enters the hole in the head "with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox". Due to the poem's attentive atmosphere and chiaroscuro effect, we readers cannot thinksee further than 'fox'. Hughes himself writes about how the poem, instead of delivering a meaning, presents reality:

> This poem does not have anything you could easily call a meaning. It is about a fox, obviously enough, but a fox that is both a fox and not a fox … It is a real fox; as I read the poem I see it move, I see it setting its prints, I see its shadow going over the irregular surface of the snow. The words show me all this, bringing it nearer and nearer. It is very real to me. The words have made a body for it and given it somewhere to walk. (*Handbook* 20)

Hughes succeeds in presenting the fox in as real a way as possible. According to him, this is also what a poem is supposed to achieve. Indeed, a few sentences later he declares the fox's achieved reality his aesthetic standard: "If I had not caught the real fox there in the words I would never have saved the poem". The fox is simply there and to Hughes' joy it will keep walking towards anyone who reads the poem (*Handbook* 20, 20). Again, as in Bishop's zoopoetics, we see that reality is the standard against which Hughes measures his poetry.

Moreover, the way to reach reality is through thorough and sustained attention. In his chapter "Learning to Think" – which might just as well have been titled "Learning to See" – Hughes illustrates this by way of an exercise:

> Imagine your uncle and nothing else – nothing whatsoever. After all, there is plenty to be going on with in your uncle, his eyes, what expression? His hair, where is it parted? How many waves has it? What is the exact shade? Or if he is bald, what does the skin feel like? His chin – just how is it? Look at it. As you can see, there is a great deal to your uncle – you could spend hours on him, if you could only keep him in your mind for hours; and when you have looked at him from head to foot, in your memory you have all the memories of what he has said and done, and all your feelings about him and his sayings and doings. You could spend weeks on him, just holding him there in your mind, and examining the thoughts you have about him. (*Handbook* 58)

An attention-training exercise such as this may seem rather easy, but if we really participate in it, it proves exceedingly difficult. It trains one to pay full attention to something by disciplining the mind not to think of something else. The exercise is reminiscent – as Hughes himself says – of yoga or mindfulness (*Handbook* 63). Hughes trained the state of mind whilst fishing: "all the nagging impulses, that normally distract you, dissolve. … You are aware in a horizonless and slightly mesmerized way … of the fish below the dark" (*Handbook* 60) The horizonless awareness occasioned by fishing is such an apt metaphor because it shows that consciousness in attention is not limited by the ego; in this form of awareness, the nagging ego has dissolved, very much comparable to Weil's man on the mountain (see chapter 5).

It is only in such a sustained exercise of attention that a turn – comparable to a volta – instigates a realisation of anymals' fundamental distinctiveness. This turn and the attendant realisation are palpable in Hughes' poem "The Horses". Like "The-Thought Fox", "The Horses" begins with a speaker: "I climbed through the woods in the hour-before-dawn dark". The air is still and the world is frosty and dark. The speaker passes the titular horses, who are "megalith-still"; they are like monuments, "grey silent fragments / of a grey

silent world". Until the sun breaks through, performing a light show, upon which the speaker turns:

> I turned
>
> Stumbling in the fever of a dream, down towards
> The dark woods, from the kindling tops.
>
> And came to the horses.
> There, still they stood,
> But now steaming and glistening under the flow of light,
>
> Their draped stone manes, their tilted hind-hooves
> Stirring under a thaw while all around them
>
> The frost showed its fires. But still they made no sound.
> Not one snorted or stamped,
>
> Their hung heads patient as the horizons,
> High over valleys, in the red levelling rays
>
> In din of crowded streets, going among the years, the faces,
> May I still meet my memory in so lonely a place
>
> Between the streams and the red clouds, hearing the curlews,
> Hearing the horizons endure. (8-9, ll. 23-38)

After having initially passed the horses, the speaker turns to the horses again, as if the first encounter was not enough to truly see them. All of the speaker's senses are open, giving readers an experience of the sunrise encounter through rhyme and repetition. The function of horizons in "The Horse" can be compared to the horizonless attention that Hughes mentioned when reflecting on his mental attitude whilst fishing. The horizons have the Bishopian virtue of patience, like the heads of the horses, brought together by the alliterated 'h' in "high" and "hanging". Although not indifferent, the horizons "endure", girdling the whole of the scene and making the experience possible for the reader, whilst staying impersonal. To underscore this effect, Hughes again uses a kind of pseudo-pronoun drop in the phrase "and came to the horses". Although the 'I' is mentioned in "I turned" three lines prior, Hughes omits the 'I' here so as to guide the reader to the horses by letting their attention collide with that of

the speaker, directing them to the pivotal line: "There, still they stood". Furthermore, omitting the first person emphasises passivity; it is as if "coming to the horses" happens to the speaker, rather than it being a wilful action. Even when the speaker expresses the wish "may I still meet my memory in so lonely a place" (line 36), and the focus lies on the speaker for the moment of that line, the attention span is not interrupted, since the depiction of the place ("streams", "red clouds" "hearing curlews") comprises the speaker's experience.

Thinking back to "The Fish" and "The Moose", we note that they have a similar atmosphere to that of "The Horses" and "The Thought-Fox". Both Bishop and Hughes elevate the encounters with anymals above worldly time and their poems instigate a self-forgetfulness, for instance by dropping pronouns or using commingling words ("aching jaw" in "The Fish" and "concentratedly" in "The Thought-Fox"). It is noteworthy that 'feeling with' is evoked especially strongly when the pronoun is dropped and verb highlighted. This selfless feeling of participation is specific to zoopoetry and must be taken into account in defining zoopoetical empathy. The zoopoetical tools that I have outlined in this study do not abound in Hughes' zoopoems. The intensified awareness of the anymal in his work is rather due to the contrast of light and dark and speaker's turn, which is only intensified by the pronoun drop that selflessly presents the anymal.

6.2.2 Two forms of mysticism: Hughes versus Vasalis

> In both Bishop's and Hughes' poems we can detect one and the same aspiration and the motives that accompany their quest. Together with the imagine-your-uncle exercise, their poems bear characteristics that I think

are best explained in reference to the tradition of mysticism. A detailed discussion of how this tradition relates to poetry is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, one of mysticism's characteristics – subject/object effacement – provides insight into how zoopoetry establishes empathy.

Poetry in general is often linked to mysticism.[80] According to the literary theorist Maaike Meijer, the unifying tenor of M. Vasalis' poetry derives from mysticism. Significantly for this study, Meijer discusses the role of nature in mystical experience, albeit briefly. The main characteristic of mysticism that she distinguishes is subject/object effacement, in which the subject experiences unification with the object, which is often instigated by a sudden turn.

80 For an enumeration of poets writing in the mystical tradition, see Glicksberg 235. For an analysis of the connections between poetry and mysticism, see C. Wilson 2001.

God and nature, but in principle everything can draw the subject out of everyday experience and let them *see* and *know* at a heightened level. The subject is passive; that is, the heightened sight or knowledge is not the result of an effort. Instead, it befalls the subject (Lust 29-30). In Vasalis' poetry, Meijer points out, this transformed mode of knowing and seeing is announced by words such as "opeens: (all at once), "plots" (suddenly), "plotseling" (suddenly), "dan" (then) and "toen" (then) – all of which indicate the turn in question (*Lust* 22). We can read an example in line 20 of Vasalis' poem "The Donkey" (in a translation by Adrienne Rich)[81]:

> In the brief, blue twilight
> I took a little walk.
> The ground was red, cracking with drought.
> The air was thin, terribly high,
> And stiff capricious blue thistles
> Rustled frantically and unwilling.
> Quietly grazing near a grey rock
> *All at once* I saw on long legs
> A young donkey;[82] (20; my emphasis)

Like the appearance of the anymal in Bishop's and Hughes' poems, the change in rhythm in line 7 leads the reader's attention to the donkey. Indeed, the turn is ushered in by an "all at once", upon which the speaker walks on, but altered.

The whole scene of the poem bears many similarities to Hughes' "The Horses" and "The Thought-Fox" and Bishop's "The Moose". All of these poems start with a depiction of the atmosphere – dawn or dusk, dark versus light – that lifts a moment out of time and in this way intensifies our awareness of the anymals. The turn in both poems is sudden, befalls the speaker, and does not result from discursive thinking, all of which seems to fit neatly in the tradition of mysticism. What is more, in "The Moose" Bishop sets the scene by contrast

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81 Thanks to Diederik Oostdijk for sharing his finding of Rich's translation from Rich's archive in Radcliffe Cambridge, Massachusetts.

82 In de korte , blauwe schemering
deed ik een kleine wandeling.
De grond was rood, gebarsten-droog.
De lucht was dun en vreeslijk hoog,
en blauwe distels stijf en grillig
ritselden driftig en onwillig.
Stil grazend naast een grijze rots
zag ik opeens op hoge benen
een jonge ezel; zijn oren schenen

ing dark and light. This is clear in the lines in which the "bus driver stops with a jolt, / turns off his lights" and the moose appears from the impenetrable wood (172). Although the turn here is mechanically prompted in that the driver stops the bus, its effect resembles both Hughes' and Vasalis' turns and accords with mysticism. The passengers in the bus all feel a sweet sensation of joy whilst the moose stays grand, otherworldly. The moose breaks into regular, humanly experienced time by looming and taking her 'moose time'.

The four moments in the poems that I have unpacked in this chapter are all best interpreted from the perspective of mysticism: this applies especially to the turns at stake in these moments, but also for the experiences of untimeliness expressed in these poems, and the speakers' altered awareness once the transformational moments are complete. When we consider this last feature more closely, however, the poems also differ in an important respect. Vasalis' "The Donkey" ends as follows:

> his face was proud.
> His long amber eyes shone
> Like water, earnest and mature
> And impartial was his glance.
> And with a quick sharp start,
> I stood rigid with astonishment.
> Or was it with respect
> For this lovely, undamaged beast
> That I slowly went further?
> A painful memory:
> I too used to be like that.
> That wholeness and gentleness,
> Easy gravity and inwardness –
> O could I recover that again,
> Begin anew at the beginning.[83] (20)

Quite unlike Hughes and Bishop, Vasalis projects herself onto the donkey, who reminds her of what she once was: pure and meek. This may count as an instance of subject/object effacement, but we need to explicate the way in which this effacement is established. Weil's paradoxical notion of subject/object effacement whilst staying separate is necessary to reveal the difference between Vasalis on the one hand and Hughes and Bishop on the other. Quite suddenly, in Vasalis' poem, the donkey is denied a separate life.

Meijer does not address the problems that attend experiences of unity with God or nature. On closer inspection, though, these problems resemble those

that I addressed at the beginning of this chapter. Put succinctly, these have to do with the opposition between projection and empathy. The effacement of the distinction between subject and object does not account for the difficulties that are encountered by such practices of effacement. The speaker might assume the unity has been secured, but actually only be projecting herself onto the object. Conversely, it may be that unity rather effaces the speaker so as to highlight the object.

The mystical experience of meeting the anymal in Hughes' and Bishop's poetry consists of a self-effacing turn through which the subject gives way to the anymal under contemplation. Their mysticism, therefore, stays grounded and earthly. Moreover, the unification in question here does equate the 'I' with the anymal, unlike in Vasalis' "The Donkey". Instead, by training attention and abstaining from self-directed thoughts and inclinations, in Hughes' and Bishop's poetry the focus – quite literally, the spotlight – falls on the anymal.

Yet in Vasalis' poetry anymals are not often the ultimate priority. This is true of "The Donkey", in which the speaker projects pride, purity, and integrity onto the donkey. In the final lines, the speaker identifies with the donkey, but not in the way that Bishop understands identification. In "The Donkey" the speaker reminisces about her own youth and longs for lost qualities, which she subsequently projects onto the donkey. The turn in "The Donkey" is not a turn *away* from the ego; in fact, it is a turn *towards* the ego and the donkey is put at the service of this deepened self-awareness.[84] This poem's mystical dimension differs profoundly from the mystical moments in Hughes' and Bishop's zoo-poems. In these works intensified seeing is aimed at the anymal itself, achieved

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83 doorzichtig, zijn gelaat was trots.
Zijn lange, ambren ogen blonken
als water, ernstig en bezonken
en onpartijdig was zijn blik.
En na een korte, felle schrik
verstarde ik in verwondering.
Of kan het eerbied zijn geweest
voor dit schoon, ongeschonden beest,
waarmee ik langzaam verder ging?
Een pijnlijke herinnering:
zo ben ik vroeger ook geweest.
Die gaafheid en zachtzinnigheid,
onzware ernst en droomrigheid,
o kon ik dat nog ééns herwinnen,
kon ik nog ééns opnieuw beginnen. (20, ll. 1-24)

84 The same happens in the following poems in Vasalis' *Verzamelde Gedichten*: "De weiden liggen ongezegd in 't licht" (79), "Paard gezien bij circus Strassburger" (74), "De winter en mijn lief zijn heen" (65). An exception is "Duif" (72) in which the speaker admires a pigeon after a thunderstorm. In the other examples the final lines turn to the mood or condition of the speaker.

through the zoopoetical tools that I have discussed in this study (though they are used sparingly) as well as similes, which refer back to the anymal.

Again, the specific form of attention advocated by Weil and Murdoch and the notion of self-effacement help us understand the difference between the two modes of mysticism on view here. Separateness (a motif that I address more comprehensively in relation to Les Murray's poetics and poetry in the next section), the conviction that something has an irreducible life of its own, is only tenable when self-interests are overcome. A selfless attitude results in a terrestrial form of mysticism, in which an anymal is neither enrolled in the service of a melancholic speaker nor seen as a portal to another dimension or lost paradise. Instead, anymals are given a place where they can be *real*, that is: themselves.

The concept of reality, so often emphasised by Bishop and Hughes, appears closely connected to empathy in their zoopoetry but not as it might be in the case of characters in novels, for instance. The notion of "catching animals" at stake in Hughes zoopoetry differs from what Virginia Woolf calls "catching a character" in novels. In her essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown", Woolf recounts something that happened whilst she was preparing to give a lecture. Suddenly "a little figure rose before her who said, 'My name is Brown. Catch me if you can'" whereupon Woolf is seduced by its "'will-o'-the-wisp'" and goes after it. Woolf then claims that nothing is more important for a novel than having a character that is real. This reality is established, she goes on, when we see and think "of all sorts of things through its eyes – of religion, of love, of war, of peace, of family life, of balls in country towns, of sunsets, moonrises, the immortality of the soul" (3, 11). This might well be problematic for zoopoetry, in which we do not think about these subjects through the eyes of the fish, moose, or fox. Indeed, we are scarcely engaged in an active thinking process at all.

If we were to apply a strict definition of a shift in perspective, we would have to face the question of whether we have adopted the anymals' perspectives, let alone empathised with them. However, practices of feeling with "a bold body" and an eye that "concentratedly" goes "about its own business" (Hughes, *Handbook* 19-20) will never meet the strict demands of a definition of empathy such as Peter Goldie's, for instance. For Goldie, eliciting empathy through literature requires being "aware of the other as a centre of consciousness distinct from myself" and having a "substantial characterization" and "narrative that I imaginatively can reenact" (qtd. in "Introduction" 2-3). That said, even less demanding definitions are too specific to allow for the experience of meeting the anymal in a poem. This goes for Maibom's definition of

empathy as "an emotion that is more appropriate to the state or situation of someone other than the person who experiences it" (qtd. in "Introduction" 2),

We feel with the thought-fox, all more so given that there is nothing more than this fox. We feelsee him set his paws in the snow, we shift between seeing his footprints in the snow, feeling the snow ourselves, experiencing the fox's hesitancy, and glimpsing the fox through the window. But these instances of 'feeling with' entail more than having vicarious emotions or re-enacting a narrative. They comprise movement, hesitance, and sights of a fox's body. Most importantly, they do not involve an 'I' ready for matching. Hughes draws the reader into the fox's world using a dictum that is rather like Bishop's: namely that the poet should reach for reality.

Hughes himself explains that this how zoopoetry enables empathy. In "Capturing Animals", his objective is to teach young students how to write poetry. Here, the extended metaphor/non-metaphor of 'anymals being poems' serves to explain how one should let poems live – an intricate matter, since words also have lives of their own (they refer to other words and contain several meanings). In bad poetry "the words kill each other", Hughes writes. To avoid this, a future poet needs to do one thing:

> That one thing is, imagine what you are writing about. *See it and live it*. Do not think it up laboriously, as if you were working out mental arithmetic. Just look at it, touch it, smell it, listen to it, *turn yourself into it*. When you do this, the words look after themselves, like magic ... After a bit of practice ... you will surprise yourself. You will read back what you have written and you will get a shock. You will have captured a spirit, a creature. (*Handbook* 19; first italics mine)

"See it and live it"; "turn yourself into it": here Hughes unpacks the connections between reality and empathy. The imagine-your-uncle exercise showed us how difficult it is to not think of anything else but the object to which are attending. But when we do this – when we have listened to "it" and "turned ourselves into it" – the object will present itself to the maker. Rather than rehearse narratives, selfless attention (as advocated by Bishop and Hughes and conceptualised by Weil and Murdoch) is markedly passive in that it emphasises seeing and listening. Through these sensations we are able to have a living experience of the anymal. This, I would suggest, is what characterises a zoopoetical understanding of empathy.

The practice of feeling with anymals proposed by Bishop and Hughes entails observing them without judgment, attending to them whilst refraining from any categorisation. It is the opposite of projection; it is a 'feeling with', but

not a form of empathy in the traditional sense. Hughes' and Bishop's zoopoetry functions, then, as a sustained training in unselfing by nurturing passivity and letting ourselves be altered by way of a turn.

One might say that Les Murray's poetry is the best example of unselfed grasp of reality. The absence of people is felt in the grammar, choice of words, and metaphors of his vast corpus of zoopoetry. Despite the lack of human presence, this body of work expands our faculty of 'feeling with'. In contrast to Hughes and Bishop, Murray uses a vast array of zoopoetical tools, as I have shown when I discussed "Yard Horse" in chapter 3. In what follows, I focus specifically on how his poetics has a place for anymals' alterity. I explain his ideas on 'feeling with' through the reading and writing of zoopoetry in relation to his poems "Equanimity" and "Spermaceti".

6.3 Disanthropic empathy in Les Murray's "romp in the Old Kingdom"

6.3.1 Disanthropy, empathy, and "Equanimity"

In Les Murray's *Translations from the Natural World*, a volume of poetry published in 1993, we take up all sorts of perspectives: those of a tick, yard horse, DNA, mollusc, pair of eagles, sperm whale, and so forth. No one is too small, too big, or too different for Murray's expansive zoopoetical project. Contrary to Bishop's and Hughes' mystical approach to anymals, in Murray's poetry we get to think of "all sorts of things through its eyes" (as Virginia Woolf thought important when establishing reality of a character; *Mr. Bennett*, 11).

However, these sorts of things are not important to a human character. Murray's task, therefore, is that of translating not only anymals' thoughts and feelings, but their whole world. In chapter 3 I argued that Murray achieves this by using many zoopoetical tools (simile, metaphor, pronoun drop, and neologism). The full range of these tools are needed for him to recreate and translate the world of a specific organism and vouchsafe their otherness. Les Murray's translations are the eminent example of the second aspect of selfless attention that I described in the previous chapter, namely the realisation that someone or something else might be distinctively different from one's own interpretation of them. When it comes to understanding how the other's alterity is granted through separateness, Weil's explanation is instructive.

Weil has very strong convictions regarding what deforms the being of beings, writing in *Gravity and Grace* that "I do not in the least wish that this created world should fade from my view, but that it should no longer be to me personally that it shows herself ... To see a landscape as it is when I am not there". This desire for self-effacement stems from the idea that "those things that I see may become perfect in their beauty from the very fact that they are no

longer things that I see" (42). Can a poet or writer present this subjectless sight? It would completely realise a disinterested presentation of the other.

Weil is neither the first nor the only thinker who has wished to imagine a world without the human gaze. Greg Garrard has coined the term "disanthropy" to capture this aspiration on the part of artists. On the one hand, the notion refers to the desire to see the world devoid of humans (Garrard shows how this is detectable, for example, in the work of D.H. Lawrence and Friedrich Nietzsche). On the other, it captures the formal problem of how writers are to depict a world without themselves providing a point of view. Weil's desire comprises both of these impulses: hers may be a desire for the world to be present on its own terms, in relation to which she also betrays a paradoxical wish to see the landscape as it is, but without her viewing it. To rephrase the second aspect of selfless attention: how can I present the other as separate from myself?

According to Garrard, a good example of disanthropy in literature is a chapter in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927). The chapter depicts a period in which the protagonist, Mrs. Ramsay, and her two children have died and the reader views their uninhabited house. No one is observing but Woolf and no one is experiencing but the reader. Garrard notes that the novel's disanthropic time span is only temporarily; after some time people – and thus recognisable points of view to the reader – arrive at the house again. For Garrard, the best example of disanthropy is a documentary titled *La Région Centrale* (1971). Garrard describes that in making this film, the artist Michael Snow chose a location in Quebec where no human ever comes and that is only accessible by helicopter. He set up a camera there and "then ingeniously ensured that every trace of human subjectivity would also be expunged from the production of the film". "The impassivity of Snow's film", Garrard writes, "hails the viewer as a coolly intrigued explorer of a radically alienated Earth" (46). He quotes Regina Cornwell, who suggests that "in *La Région Centrale* there is no attempt to conquer or to anthropomorphize nature. … Man and nature are separate, and Snow's use of his specially devised camera supports that separation" (qtd. in Garrard 46).

The idea of separateness preventing nature from being anthropomorphised is something Weil, Murdoch, and the poets whom I discuss in this chapter would endorse. However, a camera that captures nature does not give us a view without a human gaze. Images on film are intended for viewing and such viewing is mediated through a man-made device, designed specifically for the human eye. This object, the camera, passively records its surroundings and in that sense it is disanthropic. That said, the film is not the outcome of a trained passivity, meant to make room for the other's alterity. Anthropomorphism may be reduced to a minimum in a camera, but ultimately the viewer is free to anthropomorphise away. Weil's and Murdoch's thoughts on separate-

ness, in contrast, constitute a form of training in seeing with a selfless eye in artist and spectator alike. I would suggest, therefore, that they offer a better solution to the formal problem of realising a subjectless gaze than Snow's disanthropic camera. According to Murdoch, it is precisely this separateness that makes a literary work great:

> A poem, play or novel usually appears as a closed pattern. But it is also open in so far as it refers to a reality beyond itself, and such a reference raises... questions about truth... Art is truth as well as form, it is representational as well as autonomous. Of course the communication may be indirect, but the ambiguity of the great writer creates spaces which we can explore and enjoy because they are openings on to the real world and not formal language games or narrow crevices of personal fantasy; and we do not get tired of great writers, because what is true is interesting... Any serious artist has a sense of distance between himself and something quite other in relation to which he feels humility since he knows that it is far more detailed and wonderful and awful and amazing than anything which he can ever express. This 'other' is most readily called 'reality' or 'nature' or 'the world' and this is a way of talking that one must not give up. ("Philosophy and Literature" 247)

Reality is presenting the other as other in the space created by artists, not deforming them so as to bring them into line with one's own phantasies. Indeed, we might watch without seeing, read in the light of expected outcomes, and use ready-made language to understand something new. In contrast with this attitude, Murdoch presents the great writer whose literary works diminish our assumptions by showing something that is "other"—other, that is, than the writer or reader themselves. This "otherness" disposes the writer (and the reader with her) to humility in the sense that she must make room for this otherness, which, according to Murdoch, is another word for "reality". Another characteristic of great writers is that they create openness: what they write leaves "openings" in which "reality" can move around. In this sense writers both create a world and refer to the world, as Murdoch points out.

By reading Les Murray's *Translations from the Natural World* we can get a sense of how disanthropic empathy – as I will call it – might feel. It is a form of 'feeling with' that does not take matching emotions and similar selves as point of departure. Instead, it is an attempt to be selflessly present. A poet cannot do without the humility mentioned by Murdoch, which Murray phrases in terms of the awareness that "the centre of the world is in fact wherever a living thing is" (qtd. in McInerney 180). This idea is also found in Weil's work:

> To empty ourselves ... of our false divinity, to deny ourselves, to give up being the center of the world in imagination, to discern that all points in the world are equally centers and that the true center is outside the world, this is to consent to the rule of mechanical necessity in matter and of free choice at the center of each soul. Such consent is love. (*Waiting* 100)

In the next section I show how this self-abnegation relates to the subject of love. What stands out in this quotation is a sense that although de-centering ourselves humbles us, it does not put a view out of our reach. The view that is still possible is a perspectiveless view. For Murray, poems are the ultimate realisation of this de-centred condition, for they present us "an enlarged spiritual present in which no life is suppressed, where foreground and background are limited and where detail is important" (*Paperbark Tree* 160). Murray also displays this same tolerant view of creation in his poem "Equanimity", in which he writes about how glimpses of true attention reveal the world as it is. It then forms a place

> where the churchman's not defensive, the indignant aren't
> on the qui vive,
> the loser has lost interest, the accountant is truant to
> remorse,
> where the farmer has done enough struggling-to-survive
> for one day, and the artist rests from theory –
> where all are, in short, off the high comparative horse
> of their identity (179, ll. 26-32)

Once humans are off the high horse that distinguishes their identity from those around them, there is room for an awareness that binds them to other lives. As in Hughes' zoopoetry, passivity is necessary if one is to achieve a state of attentive equanimity. When we look around us, however, this state of mind is sometimes hard to detect. It is therefore

> More natural to look at the birds about the street, their life
> that is greedy, pinched, courageous and prudential
> as any of these bricked tree-mingled miles of settlement,
> to watch the unceasing on-off
> grace that attends their nearly every movement,
> the crimson parrot has it, alighting, tips, and recovers it,
> the same grace moveless in the shapes of trees
> and complex in our selves and fellow walkers; we see it's

> indivisible
> and scarcely willed. That it lights us from the
> incommensurable
> we sometimes glimpse, from being trapped in the point
> (bird minds and ours are so pointedly visual):
> a field all foreground, and equally all background,
> like a painting of equality. Of infinite detailed extent
> like God's attention. Where nothing is diminished by
> perspective. (179-180, ll. 48-60)

God's scarcely willed attention, in which nothing is backgrounded or foregrounded, resembles the perspectivelessness that Weil craves, again like the man on the mountain who sees without looking (see chapter 5). Like Murray, she sees this form of attention as realised in God. Maybe it is impossible for us to completely reach this state of equanimity, but we can learn it – for instance, by looking at birds, whom we can see as equals thanks to this state of equanimity. Murray's double emphasis on the grace that binds all life and the alterity of different life forms may seem paradoxical. However, Murray's work explicates a view that is perspectiveless, sees what makes all that lives a centre of the world, and realises that all of these centres are irreducible. A human perspective on birds, for instance, is precisely that: aspects of birds will be foregrounded and backgrounded in this perspective. Only God can see all of these living centres in a perfect, perspectiveless way. Still, that does not mean that we cannot strive to follow his example. In his evaluation of Murray's poetry, Stephen McInerney describes the poet's endeavour as that of creating "a poem [that] consciously leaves open a space in which the Other moves (174). As with the clearing in Heidegger's thinking, Murdoch's idea of the writer ("Sublime and the Beautiful" 271), and Hughes' insistence on endowing anymals with a "vivid life of their own", here again a space for (anymal) Others to roam around is seen as the characteristic of good art and good poetry.

Disanthropic empathy, then, is not a matter of matching feelings and distinct selves. Counterintuitively, separateness does not depend on encapsulated selves who re-enact narratives and feelings. Rather, it relies on a subject who does not project her own narratives and feelings. All life is bound together by God's gaze, for which everything is distinct and exists in a truly autonomous and yet open way – like a work of art, as Murdoch and Hughes put it. Realising this condition in full demands a degree of accuracy that the default definition of empathy lacks. Empathy becomes a matter of creating space, which, according to Murray, is exactly what a poem can instigate in a reader:

> The ensemble of effects in a poem calls into play our autonomic nervous system, the one we don't consciously control, by bringing about a state of alert in us. This is the state balanced between the urge to fight or flee and the urge to surrender, and in it we mime movements and gestures presented to us by whatever has caused the alert. It is a mirror state, or an echoic state, in which we half-consciously imitate the dance that is danced before us, and we probably flicker in and out of this state very rapidly, alternating it with other states such as intellectual receptivity. (*Paperbark Tree* 357)

In miming and dancing the dance of poetry readers are taken on an artistic journey that does not reproduce things that we already know or sensations that we have felt before:

> We can, by mime or using the deep structure of language, go for a romp in the Old Kingdom, among the eloquent wordless animals, faster than you can start to wonder whether you should intellectually approve what you are feeling. (*Paperbark Tree* 358)

The embodiment of poetic language and the deep structure language bind us all, making anymals eloquent despite their wordlessness. Murray's remark here is reminiscent of the biosemiotic adagio of language having a natural history (see chapter 4). This is not to say that vision of walking in the Old Kingdom, when evaluated intellectually, would ring false, an idle fancy. According to Murray, such a reaction originates in an Enlightenment paradigm ('narrowspeak' in Murray's terminology) in which literature stands opposed to science. Instead, people seek the world and truth when they resonate with what is presented in a poem. Zoopoetical tools create the opposite of 'narrowspeak'. In short, they are the poetical variant of unselfing techniques. Poets show their true artistry in zoopoetry, then, because unselfing is even more important in zoopoetry than that is in poetry in general. Murray is able to translate anymal worlds by a process of unselfing through zoopoetical tools.

6.3.2 Submerging oneself in a sperm whale's world

Despite being less clear than Bishop's anymal masks, which gave her an immediate feeling of identification, Murray's poems also function as a kind of virtual reality headset. They too shift our perspective through the abundant use of zoopoetical tools, albeit after thorough reading and interpreting.

Referring to the possibility of translating an anymal world, Murray presents his poetics by way of a possum in the final sentence of "Possum's Nocturnal Day": "nothing is apart enough for language". What, then, for Murray, is needed to translate not only thoughts but also bodies, movements, and sensory experiences? Pushing this question further, how does one translate for human readers sensory experiences that are unknown to them? Murray answers precisely this last question poetically in "Spermaceti":

> I sound my sight, and flexing skeletons eddy
> in our common wall. With a sonic bolt from the fragrant
> chamber of my head, I burst the lives of some
> and slow, backwashing them into my mouth. I lighten,
> breathe, and laze below again. And peer in long low tones
>
> over the curve of Hard to river-tasting and oil-tasting
> coasts, to the grand grinding coasts of rigid air.
> How the wall of our medium has a shining, pumping rim:
> the withstood crush of deep flight in it, perpetual entry!
> Only the holes of eyesight and breath still tie us
>
> to the dwarf-making Air, where true sight barely functions.
> The power of our wall likewise guards us from
> slowness of the rock Hard, its life-powdering compaction,
> from its fissures and streamy layers that we sing into sight
> but are silent, fixed, disjointed in. Eyesight is a leakage
>
> of nearby into us, and shows us the taste of food
> conformed over its spines. But our greater sight is uttered.
> I sing beyond the curve of distance the living joined bones
> of my song-fellows; I sound a deep volcano's valve tubes
> storming whitely in black weight; I receive an island's slump,
>
> song-scrambling ship's heartbeats, and the sheer shear of current-forms
> bracketing a seamount. The wall, which running blind I demolish,
> heals, prickling me with sonars. My every long shaped cry
> re-establishes the world, and centres its ringing structure. (44, ll. 1-24)

The 'I' in the poem seems to be a sperm whale, since spermaceti is found in the heads of sperm whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*). The poem's title, however, only refers to the organ through which a sperm whale perceives its world: the

spermaceti organ. Consisting of a waxy substance, this organ was in the past wrongly taken to be the whale's semen (hence its name).

A sperm whale has poor eye vision and uses echolocation for hunting and communication. The reverberations of the clicks emitted by the whale give him information about prey and other whales. The waxy spermaceti makes the clicks very loud, enabling the whale to communicate over long distances (Ferrari et al.).

Entering Murray's poem from a biological perspective enhances our understanding of it. Knowing how echolocation works helps us appreciate certain lines in the poem in which this phenomenon is addressed. What a biological perspective cannot intimate, however, is what it is like to be a sperm whale. Yet conveying this is precisely Murray's goal – this is why, for instance, the poem starts boldly with an 'I'. Not solely a member of a species, the whale is an individual in communicating with other individuals. 'I' changes in "our" and "we" at points where the sperm whale clarifies something about the world he inhabits. Although a first-person perspective may lead us to identify with the whale, one might counter our feeling of identification by saying that humans lack an organ by which we might experience echolocation. Thus that we differ from sperm whales too much to know what it is like to be one. Murray refutes this argument in this poem, not by emphasising our similarities with sperm whales, but rather by beginning with our differences.[85] He works with the fact that whales live in the water instead of on land, for instance, and use echolocation instead of eyesight.

As I discussed in the first chapter of this study, Ludwig Wittgenstein famously said that if a lion could speak, we could not understand him. In this poem, however, Murray seems to celebrate what language can achieve. Language, here, is the opposite of the "squeezing and using" that Murdoch argues against ("'God'" 353). Murray calls poetry "whole thinking", which reminds us of how poets use zoopoetical tools to strive for wholeness.[86] For instance, upon reading the first four words of "Spermaceti" ("I sound my sight"), we are drawn into the sense of echolocation first by the use of 'I' and second by the alliterative use of the 's' in "sound" and "sight". The alliteration heightens the effect of experiencing sound and sight as one thing. This is exactly what echolocation entails, but is unknown to humans, who usually use their eyesight primarily. The experience of sound as sight occurs five times in the poem: "I

85 He also articulates this refutation in a poem from the same volume as "Spermaceti", "Bat's Ultrasound", which explores translating the phenomenality of echolocation for human readers.

86 Murray even calls poetry "the only whole thinking" in his poem "Poetry and Religion" (*New Collected Poems* 265).

sound my sight" (line 1), "I peer in long low tones" (line 5), "we sing into sight" (line 14), "our greater sight is uttered" (line 17) and "I sound a deep volcano's valve tubes" (line 19). Describing the experience of sound as sight repeatedly, in different ways, nonetheless evokes a sense of recognition in the untrained reader. I would say that this repetition is the poetic counterpart of "spending time together", which for Dan Zahavi is indispensable for empathy, as I discussed in chapter 1 ("Phenomenology" 37).

Whales experience the distinction between land and water in exactly the opposite way to humans. So although humans are absent in the poem, they are present in the negative. Murray's work of translation is meant for humans; accordingly, the chosen themes (air versus land, eyesight versus earsight) are dictated by their distance from human experience. Murray takes his time to show to the reader these oppositions from the whale's point of view. Instead of thinking about the air as a giver of life, to the whale it is "dwarf-making", a place where "true sight barely functions" (line 11). Nevertheless, the whale has to come to the surface to breathe, which ties him to the air (line 11). Whereas whales can communicate in water ("I sing beyond the curve of distance the living joined bones" [line 18-19]), on land they cannot. When they wash up they become disjointed (indicated in line 15), whereupon they experience "the slowness of the rock Hard" (line 13). Communication is possible thanks to the water wall that transmits the long low tones for miles. The wall also functions as a medium for receiving information about coasts (lines 6 and 7) and sunken island (line 20), because the sounds reverberate. Sometimes a ship passes by using sound propagation, which the whale interprets as the ship's heartbeat, distorting the whale's song (line 21). The "sh" – sound in "shear sheer" evokes the sound of waves crashing against rocks (line 21). When the whale breaks through the surface of the water, his world has lost its centre, which is then restored again by the sound that the whale produces.

The way in which the whale characterises members of his group with the word "song-fellows" (line 19) is not really a direct translation of the whale world but gets its meaning in opposition to the human world. We could read this designation and then experience a downfallow because it moves us to break down our usual conceptions of whales. (People might say that "they are big mammals", "sperm whales are cunning hunters", or "their wax was taken to be their semen"; these characterisations are comparable to those uttered by the passengers riding Bishop's bus). Through this downfallow we see whales as not squeezed and used, but as a whale would see another whale: namely, as someone who understands her song.

A perspective shift such as this is an example of the difficult realisation that someone or something else might be distinctively different from one's own

interpretation of them. We are training to be selfless by realising that our own perspective is not a view from nowhere, but one among the many centres that make up the world and that we choose what we foreground or background. Trained selfless attention is a better solution to the formal problem of disanthropy to those surveyed by Garrard, since we are responsible for achieving this attitude. As Murray indicates, a perspective is not necessarily fixed; it is translatable and can be lived.

Zoopoetical tools are the poetic means of training a selfless eye; in Les Murray's zoopoetry, they ensure that these anymals are the centres of their world, their existence is nowhere being seized or used ("'God'" 353), and their alterity is not deemed too "apart for language".

6.4 Love that bestows individuality in the work of Judith Beveridge, Frederike Harmsen van Beek, and Mary Oliver

6.4.1 Selfless love revisited

The final aspect that I discerned in Weil's and Murdoch's concept of selfless attention, is that "selflessness presupposes an essential separateness and acknowledges the other's individuality; a process which is best described as love". In her article on Weil's and Murdoch's understanding of love, the philosopher Elisa Aaltola writes that 'love' is rarely discussed in anymal ethics. This is because philosophers tend to substantiate the thesis that anymals should have rights by way of either Kantian rationalism – in which feelings in general are discarded – or the utilitarian principle of the maximisation of pleasure ("Love and Animals" 193). In both of these ethical theories, the subject of love is seen as too opaque to ground an ethical rule. Aaltola, however, points out that distorted visions of reality arise, in part, because of the neglect of the subject of love – to be precise, the subject of love as it is explicated in Weil's and Murdoch's work.

This neglect of love in anymal ethics, Aaltola claims, has meant that anymals might easily be regarded as numbers instead of individuals. Conversely, we might be inclined to think of love in terms of craving or idealising another. But that is not love as Murdoch and Weil conceive it; in their view, craving for consolation rather stems from a self-serving phantasy that we mistake for love. Often we let our ego's interests dictate our vision and we come to live in a self-made fantasy world. For Murdoch, this is the opposite of the imagination or attentive love. In Murdoch's wordings, love is "the perception of individuals. It is the extremely difficult realisation that someone other than oneself is real. Love, and so art and morals, is the discovery of reality" ("Sublime and the Good" 215). It is a difficult realisation, since we are by nature inclined to

understand others via ourselves. Projecting ourselves into others comes more naturally than awaiting their otherness.

Following Murdoch, we can understand why love is important in the empathy debate. In line with Aaltola's stress on the importance of love for anymal ethics, I think that Murdoch's and Weil's notion of love offers us an essential view of the character of the form of 'feeling with' evoked by zoopoetry. I have already shown how zoopoetry sets forth the entangled relationships among humans and anymals; these entanglements cannot fully be explained, however, without this specific notion of love. Furthermore, the notion captures the phenomenology of being in anymals' presence, be it in real life or via poetry: a back-and-forth movement between complete attunement to the anymal in question and a selfless wonder about their experiential life.

According to Murdoch, art (or rather, good art) offers an unselfed vision of reality. Hence, selfless attention can be trained. In this respect art and morality collide, since Murdoch sees a "just and loving gaze" as the key characteristic of a moral agent ("Idea" 327). There is room for ever-more detail in this gaze, Murdoch explains, bringing us closer and closer to someone or something. However, we usually seem to have no other option but to use general language, in which individuality is erased. Studying anymals' individuality, instead of reducing them to their species-being, is a fairly new phenomenon in science.[87] The arts, in contrast, have a long history of searching for ways to preserve anymals' individualities, as in zoopoetry. In this last section, I discuss the ways in which love preserves anymal selves and allows poets to present their subjective experience.

6.4.2 What is it like to love bats? A zoopoetic manual by Judith Beveridge

Chapter 1 of this study focused on the irreducibility of subjective experience, circling around Thomas Nagel's seminal article "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?". Nagel's point is that theories of consciousness need to address the "what it is like for someone to be that someone", that is, the subjective experience of a single point of view. As an example of subjectivity's irreducibility to an objective, physical element, Nagel introduces the example of a bat. By way of this example, he makes clear that we imagine what it is like to be a bat *for me*, but never what it is like to be a bat *for a bat*. Nagel describes

87 For a discussion of anymals' individual personalities, see Ogden.

bats as an *alien* form of life, because he wants to show that what it is like to be a bat stays out of the reach of conceptualisation. Bats, therefore, perfectly illustrate the irreducibility of ineffable *qualia*. Nagel does not feel the need to explain their alienness: "anyone who has spent some time in an enclosed space with an excited bat knows what it is to encounter a fundamentally *alien* form of life" (438).

Aside from the fact that later in the article Nagel contradictorily ascribes all sorts of characteristics to bats (e.g. that they have subjective experience or they find their way via echolocation, which gives them a 3D, auditory picture of the space) whilst simultaneously calling them alien, the peculiarity of Nagel's argument is already apparent in the sentence that I have just quoted. Here, he presents the idea that bats are alien as a truism. No doubt, an excited bat is frightening to behold, especially if we are not used to bats, not having spent time together. What might frighten or upset us in this case, however, is precisely the *bat's* fear. Strangely enough, Nagel already knows what is exciting the bat: the enclosed space.[88] The bat feels trapped in a space that is not his or her own and is frightened. The explanation of his or her excitement, therefore, is not that alien at all. Moreover, the bat's fear is the cause of our fear in Nagel's example, which therefore exemplifies both empathy and a shift of perspectives. Nagel rationalises his feeling of fear by calling bats alien. Another approach is possible, however, according to which we take a step back and start with what binds us with the bat – our shared fear. If we take this alternative route, we encounter more uncertainties and questions about the bat's behaviour. It asks more of our time and willingness to learn. It demands a certain form of attention, which is much harder to train than easily setting the bat aside as being alien.

This is the route taken by the poet Judith Beveridge in her poem "How to Love Bats". Love is the generic term for this approach to the anymal and is best understood in the manner put forward by Murdoch and Weil. Not taken aback by the bats' alienness, Beveridge urges the reader to articulate and train their love for them. Although the poem rests on the idea that ignorance breeds intolerance, of course it has much more to say than this truism suggests. Indeed, it insists that loving is a way of becoming:

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88 Another reading might be possible, if we understand the sentence as describing Nagel himself being in a bat's surroundings, which feel enclosed to him. I think this interpretation is not especially likely, however, since a bat's habitat is usually a cave, which bats of course do not experience as enclosed. This makes the excitement harder to explain. Moreover, bats live with each other in a cave, whereas Nagel writes about a bat, singular. I therefore think that "an enclosed space" has to do with the bat who finds himself trapped.

Begin in a cave.
Listen to the floor boil with rodents, insects.
Weep for the pups that have fallen. Later,
you'll fly the narrow passages of those bones,
but for now —

open your mouth, out will fly names
like *Pipistrelle, Desmodus, Tadarida*. Then,
listen for a frequency
lower than the seep of water, higher
than an ice planet hibernating
beyond a glacier of Time. (ll. 1-11)

"Begin in a cave" is the first imperative in the poem. For philosophers, the cave is the place in which an intellectual journey starts. That said, if all goes well and a philosopher frees his or her mind, they certainly do not return to the cave (unless you are Socrates). Plato's cave is a place of shadow-knowledge. There may be copycats here, and a lot of parroting, but the actual anymals themselves are not present. To achieve real knowledge, philosophers need to somehow shed their body. Instead of resting beside the flickering light of the fire, they should turn towards the steady, blinding light of the sun. For the love of bats, however, we have to go into the cave again and start thinking where bats start their life.

In the cave, we are compelled to enlarge the limits of our sensory experience. Here, we can feel the tight connection between poetry and anymals argued for by Derrida, Hughes, and Driscoll. In "How to Love Bats", the training in empathy and perspective shift depends solely on the studious use of language. Strictly speaking, there is no pronoun drop here for the poem consists of imperatives. One characteristic of imperatives, however, is precisely that they leave the subject out. It would appear that loving bats entails the absence of the subject; at the same time it involves training yourself to swap perspectives with a bat. If Thomas Nagel wrote about bats being alien, the question now would be this: would he have done so had he visited a bat cave? Had he spent time with them in their own surroundings and not in an enclosed space? Had he read "How to Love Bats?" by Judith Beveridge?

In Beveridge's poem, once we have entered the cave, we are urged to mourn the pups that have fallen and listen to the rodents and insects crawling on the floor. It is as if Beveridge has read Daniel Dennett's answer to Thomas Nagel's

resigned remark that however many aspects of bats we might imagine, they do not take us very far, for our own imagination restricts our ability to grasp their subjective experience, the "what it is for a *bat* to be a bat" (Nagel 439). Although Dennett might concur with this, he rebuts Nagel's further claim that *scientifically* gathered facts about a bat's sensory apparatus have nothing to tell us about what it is like to be a bat either. Beveridge, in turn, poetically denies Nagel's first claim (that our imagination is inadequate to the task of imagining a bat's subjective experience from a bat's perspective, since it is based upon our own experience and therefore limited). She lets the reader imaginatively seek a sound that falls outside of our hearing range using a phenomenological metaphor: "a frequency / lower than the seep of water, higher / than an ice planet hibernating / beyond a glacier of Time" (lines 8-11).

It is as if Beveridge is saying that we can extend our experiences, by way of a phenomenological metaphor, for instance. Initially, her imperatives lead us to where bats are:

> Visit op shops. Hide in their closets.
> Breathe in the scales and dust
> of clothes left hanging. To the underwear
> and to the crumbled black silks — well,
> give them your imagination
> and plenty of line, also a night of gentle wind.
>
> By now your fingers should have
> touched petals open. You should have been dreaming
> each night of anthers and of giving
> to their furred beauty
> your nectar-loving tongue. But also,
> your tongue should have been practising the cold
> of a slippery, frog-filled pond.
>
> Go down on your elbows and knees. (ll. 12-24)

We are not bats and are unable to become them. Our tongues may never factually become "nectar-loving", as Beveridge's commingling characterisation has it – we just do not have such tongues. Instead of walking down the dead-end ally of sceptical reasoning, however, Beveridge directs the reader towards an understanding of love that consists partly of taking up a perspective by placing ourselves in the position and situation of a bat, whilst backgrounding our own sensory apparatus.

Some imperatives are straightforward: we know how to go down on our elbows and knees (line 24), spend time in charity shops, and hide in their closets (line 12). In short, we know how to be where bats are. But then the encouragements become more obscure:

> You'll need a speleologist's desire for rebirth
> and a miner's paranoia of gases —
> but try to find within yourself
> the scent of a bat-loving flower. (ll. 25-28)

The cave in which bats are born and sleep forms a second womb, which humans can enter on the proviso that they have a speleologist's desire for rebirth – which is itself a commingling phrase. Obviously, speleologists do not necessarily have a desire for rebirth and if they have it will not be fulfilled by entering a cave. There is a sense, however, in which a bat re-enters the womb each time that they fly back into the cave. A speleologist can easily bond with bats, then, since they both long to be in caves. A "desire for rebirth" can only serve as an identifier, however, if we are talking about a creature who combines human and bat. The following stage of coming to love bats involves identifying with them, even as they are viewed as pests.

> Read books on pogroms. Never trust an owl.
> Its face is the biography of propaganda.
> Never trust a hawk. See its solutions
> in the fur and bones of regurgitated pellets.
>
> And have you considered the smoke
> yet from a moving train? You can start
> half an hour before sunset,
> but make sure the journey is long, uninterrupted
> and that you never discover
> the faces of those Trans-Siberian exiles. (ll. 29-38)

"Read books on pogroms" (line 30) is an unsettling imperative. Beveridge does not refrain from comparisons between populations suffering under ethnic violence and bats threatened by battues. Owls, for the latter, are one source of danger. In a human world owls might stand for wisdom, but in a bat world we need to reinterpret their appearance. People are another threat. Bats are seen as pests; when they hide in chimneys in people's homes, they are often smoked out. Beveridge's mention of pogroms, Trans-Siberian exiles (line 38),

and smoke from chimneys (line 33) leaves us with no other way of reading this stanza than as a comparison between the persecution of bats and Jews.

In Coetzee's *Lives*, Elizabeth Costello's comparison between slaughterhouses and concentration camps is met with resistance on the part of the poet Abraham Stern. Costello says that if Jews were treated like cattle, then cattle are treated like Jews (148); Stern's main objection is that this inversion insults the dead. The comparison is also reminiscent of the starfish washing ashore in Judith Herzberg's poem "Starfish", which we were urged not read as a metaphor (see chapter 3). Like Costello and Herzberg, Beveridge does not flinch in drawing the comparison. Perhaps she does so more obliquely than Costello, though, since she shifts between perspectives and contexts, moving quickly from one stanza to the other:

> Spend time in the folds of curtains.
> Seek out boarding-school cloakrooms.
> Practise the gymnastics of web umbrellas. (ll. 39-41)

Practising folding and unfolding like web umbrellas (line 41) and spending time in the bats' environment is not enough. Beveridge goes further in the following stanza, using musical metaphors, rhyme, and rhythm to convey a bat's *Umwelt*. The metaphors are phenomenological in that they, like commingling words, perform the bat's subjective experience in a comparison that resonates with the human reader.

> Are you
> floating yet, thought-light,
> without a keel on your breastbone?
> Then, meditate on your bones as piccolos,
> on mastering the thermals
> beyond the tremolo; reverberations
> beyond the lexical.
>
> Become adept
> at describing the spectacles of the echo —
>
> but don't watch dark clouds
> passing across the moon. This may lead you
> to fetishes and cults that worship false gods
> by lapping up bowls of blood from a tomb. (ll. 42-54)

"Spectacles of the echo" (line 51) is reminiscent of the phrase "I sound my sight" in Les Murray's "Spermaceti" because it too translates echolocation for humans, most of whom primarily use their eyesight. Recent studies may tell us that echolocation is a way of hearing and not a completely alien way of viewing the world (as Thomas Nagel argued), yet it still needs to be translated for untrained humans.[89] This because for bats echolocation is as normal a way of grasping the world as sight is for humans. Do not confuse a bat with the blood-licking vampire, Beveridge urges the reader. Instead, one must repeatedly

> Practise echo-locating aerodromes,
> stamens. Send out rippling octaves
> into the fossils of dank caves —
> then edit these soundtracks
> with a metronome of dripping rocks, heartbeats
>
> and with a continuous, high-scaled wondering
> about the evolution of your own mind. (ll. 55-61)

With this final imperative, which loses its imperative character on account of its length, Beveridge invites reader's sense of wonder at our evolved bat minds. It is an example of Murdoch's "unsentimental, detached, unselfish objective attention" ("Sovereignty" 64). The notion of alienness has no place in this unselfish attention, since it tells us more about preconceived ideas about bats than bats themselves. Put differently, perceptions of bats' alienness stem from projection rather than patience.

In the final stanza Beveridge tells us that love cannot be prescribed, that there is no manual for it. What teaches us how to love bats is nothing more than observation:

> But look, I must tell you — these instructions
> are no manual. Months of practice
> may still only win you appreciation

89 Sean Allen-Hermanson in the essay "So That's What It's like!", for instance, shows that echolocation is in fact a kind of hearing: "Echolocatory experience probably just has an auditory character. It's the experience of hearing rapid squeaks and shrieks and their echoes, and though a bit unusual to consider, it is easily within one's imaginative grasp. To the complaint that knowing what it is like for a bat to hear echoes isn't the same as knowing what it is like for a human, or for *me*, one need only point out that it should at least be no more mysterious than asking what it is like for a dog to see something. Presumably, it is like seeing something. Notice people tend to concur about what vision is like, but not echolocation" (157-158).

of the acoustical moth,
hatred of the hawk and owl. You may need

to observe further the floating black host
through the hills. (ll. 62-68)

Ultimately, there is no manual for love. To perfect the art of loving bats, one needs to observe them continuously and selflessly. This advice is very much in line with both Murdoch's and Weil's analyses and Bishop's description of Darwin.

6.4.3 The opposite of an "urgent, impelling being" in Frederike Harmsen van Beek's "Good morning? Heavenly Lady Ping"

The previous sections on Hughes, Bishop and Beveridge have provided us with examples of a detached, unsentimental, and unselfish observation and how to train ourselves to realise that "something other than oneself is real". It may be that "How to Love Bats" also exemplifies Weil's and Murdoch's conception of love as "the perception of individuals" (Murdoch "The Sublime and the Good" 215). This interpretation of love is illuminating at this juncture of this study, for it shows that many of the poems that I have discussed so far unselfishly observe individuals as representatives of a *species* rather than as individuals in their own right. Seeing an individual would entail attending not only to an anymal's species-specific being, but to their biography too. Just as humans have specific life histories and idiosyncrasies, so do anymals. Since having conversations with individual anymals requires spending extended periods of time with them, however, their biographies usually go unwritten – save for those of our pets. It is unsurprising, then, that most of the zoopoetry about individual anymals concerns pets. In his monograph *Poetry and Animals: Blurring the Boundaries with the Human,* Onno Oerlemans makes the disheartening comment that "[b]roadly speaking, Western cultures value individual animals when they are pets, but not if they are wild animals or livestock". All anymals not only have species-specific *Umwelten*, but also individual histories and therefore personal, multiform takes on the world, about which we know nothing. When we let these facts sink in, we might concur with Oerlemans' remark that to do justice to anymals' specific subjectivities is to remain silent about them and teach ourselves some humility (121, 127).

The hazards of anthropomorphising or mystification, but also of rationalising anymals' individuality away as alien are felt all the more keenly when these individuals are recognised as having faces in a Levinasian sense. Seeing *someone*, instead of an instance of a species inhibits us being silent about them. We may not be accustomed to descriptions of the biography of an individual bat, who may have a different experience of time, relationships, others, deaths, joys, and sicknesses – that is, all of those elements of which a human biography usually consists. We can nonetheless make a start, however insufficient, by imagining being in their context and their ability to echolocate.

That said, the dividing line between a species-specific description of an *Umwelt* and a personal history may not be so clear cut; smells will be part of any credible dog biography, for instance. By contrast, Oerlemans refers to Frederick Gaber's analysis of poems by William Wordsworth, in which he (Gaber) points out that Wordsworth demonstrates the awareness that "the subjectivity of the object exists but cannot be known" (127). Oerlemans quotes Gaber on Wordsworth:

> His protection of the discreteness of the objects he experiences, his refusal... to overwhelm them with his own urgent impelling being, is in part a protection of his own individuality, which he does not want to lose by blending it with another or by being swamped. (qtd. in Oerlemans 127)

Oerlemans underscores Gaber's view by adding that Wordsworth's poems "present the paradox that an awareness of and respect for the subjectivity of another being requires one to be more or less silent about it" (127). I do recognise the many ways in which a zoopoem can lose sight of the anymal; a zoopoem might produce a sentimental image instead of appealing to the senses, project feelings and narratives onto anymals rather than listen to them, fantasise about the anymal rather than selflessly observe it, or take anymals as occasions for sermonising rather than honing our attention. That aside, however, I have shown that there are ways of being aware of the other's subjectivity without having to stay silent about it. Gaber himself gives us a clue as to what these involve: grasping the other's individuality, in short, entails nurturing the opposite of our "urgent impelling being".

An example of what I mean here can be found in Frederike Harmsen van Beek's hesitant, almost fragmentary ponderings about how to comprehend chickens:

> To understand a wee bit of chickens, one must have been one really. I am not a chicken, but I have known many of them since I was young. Of quite a few I remember not only their names, but also their faces and habits. I have, so to speak, curled up to roost in their barns in between the beams and their neglected homes, quite rightly named "coops" and was able to get an impression. I have seen them from up close, heard them, smelled them, rethought them. Hens. And roosters. Sure enough. To understand something, anything, other than one's own life form – anyway understanding is usually possible, but comprehension is not and therein lies the difficulty – to fathom something, anything, even if it is clear from the start, as it is with everything, it will never work. For a start one has become diminutive – scarcely absent, as unsuspected as possible, and therefore very loving (*In Goed en Kwaad* 238).[90]

Harmsen van Beek's bouncy style reflects our hesitations in trying to grasp other forms of life. It is an example of the back-and-forth movement that I mentioned in the first chapter. According to Harmsen van Beek, successfully seeing the individual anymal requires a diminished self, which she equates with being "very loving". Here again we recognise the Murdochian and Weilian theme of the necessity of self-abnegation in giving our full, loving attention to the object.

Love, then, works both ways. It directs our attention to a chicken, but not just a chicken as a member of a species, but rather as some*one* with a face and certain habits. At the same time, by directing our attention toward a chicken, we ourselves become "scarcely absent". As Harmsen van Beek suggests in her poem "Good morning? Heavenly Lady Ping", which is dedicated to the speaker's cat, Lady Ping, who lost her entire litter. From the cat's perspective, the speaker trying to comfort her becomes "the intimate roommate with extended hind legs":

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90 Om kippen een beetje te kunnen begrijpen, moet men er eigenlijk een zijn geweest, Ik ben geen kip – maar wel heb ik er van jongs af vele gekend. Ik herinner me van verscheidene niet alleen de namen, maar ook de gezichten en de gewoonten. Om zo te zeggen, ik heb me klein gemaakt en ben op hun stokken in de schuren tussen de balken en in hun eeuwig verwaarloosde woningen, zeer terecht genoemd hokken, gaan zitten – en zo heb ik me een indruk kunnen vormen. Van nabij heb ik ze gezien, gehoord, geroken en nabedacht. Kippen. En hanen. Jawel. Om iets, wàt dan ook, om een, van je eigen, afwijkende levensvorm te kunnen begrijpen – enfin *begrijpen* kan meestal wel, maar *bevatten* kan niet, en daarin schuilt de moeilijkheid – om iets, wat dan ook, te doorgronden, zelfs indien van te voren al duidelijk is, zoals met alles, dat het toch wel nooit lukken zal, moet men om te beginnen zich heel klein maken – heel onaanwezig, zo onverdacht mogelijk en dus zeer liefhebbend.

This illness, dear pitiful madam,
Is a butcherly scallywag and this much is clear:

There is no way of littering up against it, even for the
undertaker, the intimate roommate, the

well-known server of lukewarm milk,
who on extended hind legs

almost can't keep pace with the burying
is it not, Lady Ping, radarmoustacheod,

double-pointedly-capped, ladyeyelike catess?
It is better now to sit without wistfulness in

the raw fragrant morning air, now the sun is still
tender and the curtains still vivid in the good

cheerful wind. Oh stalktaily gorgeous,
look, silent simpleminded dearest,

there goes an important, very tiny but
quite tasty critter between the gravel stones

under the heavenly blue hydrangea.

(*To my dejected cat, for comfort at the departing of her brood*).[91] (24-25, ll. 11-29)

The poem makes abundant use of neologistic compounding. For instance, Harmsen van Beek manages to give three new compounds in sequence ("radarmoustacheod, double-pointedly-capped, ladyeyelike catess") without making the poem difficult to read. We come to know that the cat is the speaker's "dearest" because she says so in line 24. We already knew this, though, on account of the unselfing compounds. They have a double effect: we zero in on the cat through the compounds, which, at the same time, convey the speaker's love. "Radarmoustacheod" is the most feline of the three compounds. It reminds the reader that a cat receives most of her information about the surrounding world through her nose and whiskers, which are more than a human moustache in that they function as a radar. "[D]ouble-pointedly-capped" and "ladyeyelike" belong more to the human world. We can sense the speaker's affection for the

cat in them, because inventing neologisms is a way of showing one's love for something whilst celebrating its individuality.

Love can also be detected in the lines "It is better now to sit without wistfulness in / the raw fragrant morning air, now the sun is still / tender and the curtains still vivid in the good / cheerful wind". This is because the commingling words "raw fragrant morning air" are meant specifically to divert the cat's attention to the morning air and the vivid curtains. Seeing curtains as vivid calls to mind the "aching jaw" in Bishop's "The Fish" (see my discussion above). The curtains are vivid for a cat – they move, they can be chased. Here Harmsen van Beek uses an adjective to perform a quick shift in perspectives, like Bishop in "The Fish".

At the end of the poem especially, Harmsen van Beek exemplifies her own advice that one should be "scarcely absent … and therefore very loving" in attending to anymals. The final lines, in which the small but important and tasty critter is introduced, begins with the imperative "look". Although this word is set between commas, as if the speaker is talking to the cat, here the speaker's and cat's view coincide in that the critter is important to the cat and the speaker has again shifted perspective. Or, to put this perhaps more precisely, the speaker labels an interspace that is understandable for both of them. If one is lovingly attentive, one can see that the critter is important to the cat. Commingling words are the preeminent zoopoetical tool for marking an anymal's individuality. By the end of the poem the perspective shift is complete: the critter of great interest lightens the cat's grief for her lost litter. It consumes all her attention, upon which the poems ends abruptly – a bit like a cat's way of (not) saying goodbye.

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91 deze ziekte, lieve beklagenswaardige mevrouw,
is een wrede rakker en zoveel is wel duidelijk:
er valt niet tegenop te baren, waar zelfs het
begrafeniswezen, die intieme huisgenoot, die
zeer bekende schenker ook van lauwe melk,
op zijn verlengde achterpoten het ter
aarde bestellen welhaast niet meer bij kan
benen, nietwaar, dame Ping, radarbesnorde,
dubbelgepuntmutste, mevrouwogige poezin?
Het is nu beter te zitten zonder weemoed in
de rauwe geurige ochtendlucht, nu de zon nog
teder is en de gordijnen levendig in de goede
vrolijke wind. O halmstaartige voortreffelijke,
kijk, zwijgzame zwakzinnige allerliefste,
er loopt een belangwekkend, héél klein maar
bijzonder lekker beestje tussen de kiezelstenen
onder de hemelsblauwe hortensia
(Aan mijn neerslachtige poes, ter vertroosting bij het overlijden van zijn gebroed) (24-25, ll. 11-29)

6.4.4 Zoopoetical empathy as attention through Mary Oliver's little hawk

Poets are anymals who inhabit human animals' daily lives. We readily assume that they have individual characters because we gradually but inevitably come to know their habits. Zoopoetry, however, can direct us to a more inclusive grasp of who has individuality. To come to know individual anymals as more than representatives of their species, we need to ascribe them experiential states that go beyond species-specific experiences. In the following poem, Mary Oliver shows no hesitancy to ascribe specific subjective experiences to an anymal who is probably not a pet. In so doing, Oliver gives us an example of the direct perception argument concerning anymal minds, which I discussed in the introduction and chapter 1. The poem is also a criticism – perhaps inadvertent– of the idea that if we cannot know everything about a certain mind, we must be sceptical about knowing anything about it:

> The Real Prayers Are Not the Words,
> But the Attention that Comes First
>
> The little hawk leaned sideways and, tilted,
> rode the wind. Its eye at this distance looked
> like green glass; its feet were the color
> of butter. Speed, obviously, was joy. But
> then, so was the sudden, slow circle it carved
> into the slightly silvery air, and the
> squaring of its shoulders, and the pulling into
> itself the long sharp-edged wings, and the
> fall into the grass where it tussled a moment,
> like a bundle of brown leaves, and then, again,
> lifted itself into the air, that butter-color
> clenched in order to hold a small, still
> body, and it flew off as my mind sang out oh
> all that loose, blue rink of sky, where does
> it go to, and why?
> (133, ll. 1-15)

The title of the poem could well have been a quotation from Simone Weil's work. In the poem, the attention that comes first is the observation of the little hawk. The prayer presumably starts with the final lines, with "my mind sang out oh..." Also the existential question "where does it go to and why?" at the

end of the poem has a religious connotation. However, even though someone is praying, the mind of the speaker itself is only important insofar as it is attentive of the little hawk. Looked at in terms of poetic tools, we may notice that the words pray and prey are homophones. Given that 'preier' is an old word for birds of prey, we read the word "prayers" in the title equivocally.[92]. We have seen passages in poems that are comparable to Oliver's ascription of joy to the hawk; both Elizabeth Bishop's "The Moose" ("*Taking her time*, she looks the bus over") and Ted Hughes' "The Fox" (a body that is *bold* to come") use commingling words, which combine mind and body, to show subjective experience. Here Oliver goes further, not hesitating to use a supposedly human word – "joy" – to refer to a hawk's behaviour: "Speed, obviously, was joy." But it is not only the speed, but also the whole of the hunt that is joy to the hawk, from the carved circle in the air to the squaring of its shoulders. In fact, what constitutes joy does not stop at the limits of Oliver's description, for the line only stops at the end of the poem. The joy of the hawk's flight fills the onlooker with amazement. Ascribing joy to anymals has an important history. Jane Goodall broke the anthropodenialist rules of ethology by writing that chimpanzees, like humans, are "capable of solving problems, capable of love and hate, joy and sorrow, fear and despair" (xiii). Recognising these abilities and emotions in anymals goes hand in hand with perceiving them as individuals, since they imply that each anymal has a separate experiential life. Seeing minded, feeling bodies is a way of beginning to recognise their individuality, when it comes to both humans and anymals. "Joy" is a commingling word in that it shows that there is no dividing line between body and mind. This becomes visible when Oliver sees joy in "the squaring of [the hawk's] shoulders". We might be inclined to regard this as anthropomorphic projection: humans square their shoulders when they have accomplished something; indeed, it is a sign of proud joy. Calling Oliver's observation of joy anthropomorphic is one possible response to her use of the commingling word "joy" in the poem. Goodall, however, writes the following:

> Young animals, human or otherwise, show such similar behavior when they are well fed and secure – frisking, gambolling, pirouetting, bouncing, somersaulting – that it is hard not to believe they are not expressing very similar feelings. They are, in other words, full of *joie de vivre* – they are happy. (xiii-xiv)

92 In Dutch, the verb that translates 'hovering' is *bidden*, which also means to pray.

The *joie de vivre* is what binds all living beings; when we are attentive we recognise it across species. It is because she has spent so much time with anymals that Goodall does not hesitate to name what she sees joy. The emotion is easily recognisable since we all perform the same behaviour when feeling happy. We can spend time with anymals by reading unselfed texts about them, of which the zoopoems I discussed are eminent examples. It is important to notice that the notion of joy in the poem refers to the hawk's whole being: Oliver's meaning is precisely that the hawk is full of being, full of joy. Elizabeth Costello uses the word joy along similar lines in Coetzee's *Lives* to underscore her central thesis that there are no bounds to the sympathetic imagination:

> What is it like to be a bat? Before we can answer such a question, Nagel suggests, we need to be able to experience bat life through the sense-modalities of a bat. But he is wrong; or at least he is sending us down a false trail. To be a living bat is to be full of being; being fully a bat is like being fully human, which is also to be full of being. Bat-being in the first case, human-being in the second, maybe; but those are secondary considerations. To be full of being is to live as a body-soul. One name for the experience of full being is *joy* (45).

Costello subsequently adds that it is hard to sustain one's fullness of being in confinement, "where the flow of joy that comes from living not in or as a body but simply from being an embodied-being has no place" (Coetzee 47). Saying that joy – or experiencing life as a "body-soul" – is fundamental to both human animals and anymals does not mean that the differences between them are unimportant. They are, however, secondary when it comes to talking about the "what it is like". A pig has different needs than a butterfly when it comes to letting the *joie de vivre* flow. These differences, however, do not inhibit empathy as zoopoetry intuits. Zoopoetical empathy, then, would be best described as a form of selfless attention, which gives the anymal under contemplation space in which to roam around. Rather than searching for matching emotions, zoopoetical empathy emphasises the need for a selfless attitude on the part of the subject. To that end, zoopoetry tries to stretch and train our imagination by bringing us to experience unselfing zoopoetical tools. In Costello's words, it calls on us to open our hearts to anymals (Coetzee 48); it asks us to love anymals in their individuality and separateness, as Murdoch and Weil would have it. In these ways, all of the zoopoems that I have discussed appeal to us to enlarge our sympathetic imagination so as to acknowledge our entangled empathies.

All of this is at play in Oliver's hawk. Oliver sees the flow of joy in the hawk's whole being; this joy spreads to the speaker by way of their observa-

tion. This overflowing joy emphasises that humans and other anymals have a fundamentally shared nature. In the final lines, Oliver uses the zoopoetical tool of questioning: "Where does it go to and why?" If we value wonder and attentiveness, leaving questions in one's work should not be taken as a sign of indecision. Oliver's questions show that our attention holds an individual. The asking of these questions individualises the bird, for the bird is the only person who can provide us with answers. The questions open up the possibility that they have their own purposes, their own specific reasons for flying up and away.

Epilogue

In this study I have explored entanglements among humans and anymals through reading and interpreting zoopoetry. My aim has been to find grounds upon which to formulate a definition of zoopoetical empathy by analysing poetry, with an eye on the poems' specificity. Looking back, I can now see that, in this study, I have accepted an invitation that Martha Nussbaum extended a long time ago in the form of an important question. "Might there be other ways of being precise?" Nussbaum posed this question as part of her endeavour to have the study of novels included in ethical theory, as opposed to analytic philosophers' "dry", "disengaged", and "disentangled style" (*Love's Knowledge* 19, see 3.4.1). Like ethical theory, zoopoetics and the empathic engagements with anymals unfolded through poetry call for a mode of interpretation that is the opposite of a disentangled and disengaged method. I have examined a way of analysing zoopoetry that would bring to light aspects of engagements that would otherwise escape our attention: signs of unexpected, shared anymality learned through metaphors and similes; indicators of visible subjectivity noticed through commingling words; and the unstable margins of fixed paradigms, interrogated through questioning and hesitation.

As a final, emblematic example of the necessity of zoopoetry's specificity, let me discuss Judith Herzberg's poem "The Way" ("Zoals").

The Way
The way you sometimes enter a room, and don't know why,
and then have to go back along the track of your intention,
the way, without groping, you sometimes grab something from the closet
and only when you have it know what it is,
the way you sometimes take a package somewhere,
and when you leave keep thinking, worrying,

that you feel too light, the way you, while waiting,
fall in love for a second with every new person
but still are mainly waiting,
the way you know: I have been here before but don't know why,
and you suddenly pick up a scent which
reminds you, the way you know with whom you have to be watchful
and with whom not, with whom you can lie down,
that is the way, I think, animals think, and know their way. (6)

Herzberg uses an extended simile to instigate a wait-and-see attitude in the human interpreter. Something is "the way" that something else is. However, the lulling effect of the repetition of the phrase "the way" might almost lead us to forget that a simile needs two things that are related to each other. By being tentative and hesitant, the poem instead sketches possibilities that we are invited to experience: instances of shimmering knowledge and half-felt intuitions that we recognise, but are not immediately related to anymals. In that sense the poem gestures as to its content; the reader becomes caught up in an indefinable feeling of reading an endless riddle that has neither a question nor an answer. It is through the simile that Herzberg can say and not say how anymals think – this is almost saying something *ex negativo* about their thinking process.

The final line of Herzberg's poem indicates that it is actually human readers that serve as a point of comparison for anymals, not the other way around. Without knowing it, we inhabit an anymal's perspective, whilst thinking that Herzberg is labelling those vague moments in a human animal's daily life that wordlessly fall between knowing and not knowing, awareness and unawareness. The simplistic resolution is suddenly given in the final sentence, shaking this default perspective. Even in the resolution, however, we feel that we are exploring a possibility. All of the poem's descriptions of vacillating conscious decisions, moods, and feelings feel familiar, yet it appears that they are not only our own. This stretches our empathetic skills and renders potential sceptical comments moot. Without filling the space that this opens up with new beliefs about anymals and humans, the poem nevertheless does not stay silent about the anymals' experiential world. This is thanks to other zoopoetical tools, such as the hesitation in "I think" and the meaning of "track" in "track of your intention", which relates to a thoroughly lived experience. Finally, the simile's resolution in the final sentence causes a downfallow, in that the emotions stirred up – an inhalation occasioned by a wordless, affected affirmation – diminishes one's preconceived ideas about anymals.

Crucially, Herzberg uses her trademark zoopoetical tool of questioning and hesitating to open up a space. The conjecture "I think" in the final line leaves room for a refutation and reminds us that knowledge is always provisional. It might also remind us of the famous "I think" penned by Charles Darwin at the top of his first-known sketch of the tree of life, or of the ground of being in René Descartes' *cogito* argument. I think that Herzberg's "I think" is a zoopoetical "I think"; it is used as a thinkfeeling, a sensation (which requires a neologism) showing that this poem reveals another way of being precise. It is through such zoopoetic specificity that poems can provide anymals with a space in which their existence is not diminished for human's sake. Zoopoetical tools are at the heart of the process of unsettling pre-established perspectives through poetry. These tools play a key role in imagining anymals' alterity, whether by unselfing observation, silencing human subjectivity, or enabling us to investigate our shared anymality, without effacing difference.

Summary

A vast body of research addresses the relationships between empathy and novels figuring human protagonists, and the notion that novel reading as a kind of 'empathy training' meets little skepticism. As the saying goes, readers can live a thousand lives in the minds of the characters in the novels they read.

How different the case when the protagonists are anymals instead of humans.[93] This study focuses on zoopoetry to explore the intricate relation between anymals, poems, and empathy. It addresses the abyss between the anymal and the human, whether an abyss of knowledge or of phenomenal experience, to argue that poets who write about anymals employ 'zoopoetical tools' to bridge the gap between the two worlds. They employ an array of traditional poetic tools such as rhythm and metaphor, but they also draw from a previously unnamed zoopoetical lexicon to illustrate how the assumed abyss between the anymal and the human is in fact based on speciesism and Cartesian dualism.

In his article "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" (1974), the philosopher Thomas Nagel provocatively argues that we are unable to know what it is to feel batlike. We might be able to imagine to a certain extent what it is to fly around and catch insects in our mouths, he writes, but then we only know what it is like for us to behave like a bat, whereas we can never know what it is like *for a bat to be a bat*. In trying to imagine what a bat experiences, we stumble on a line we can never cross, between our own subjective worlds and the phenomenal experience of the bat. Researchers in both literary studies and biology often invoke Nagel's example and presume a skeptical stance concerning the knowability

93 For the reasons to use "anymal" instead of "animal", see "Note to the Reader".

and envisionability of the phenomenal experience of anymal others. In this vein, Jenny Diski writes that there is "an abyss of knowledge that we simply can't cross" (73).

Three central oppositions emerge from speciecism and Cartesian dualism to complicate explorations of zoopoetical anymals: anthropocentrism versus anymals as themselves; projectivism versus empathy or sympathetic identification; and anymals inside a text versus anymals outside a text. Note that the tension in these oppositions is less felt when human subjects receive poetic attention. Zoopoetical anymals, however, seem to be inevitably anthropomorphised by poets and readers alike. As a result, empathy seems to become an unattainable ideal; with whom would we be empathising?

In this study I argue, however, that many of these assumptions about anymal minds are based upon Cartesian dualism. This study, therefore, is driven by two central questions that counter these assumptions. In what ways does zoopoetry confront and unsettle Cartesian dualism? How do instances of perspective shift and empathy evoked through zoopoetry contribute to the empathy debate? These questions are not straightforwardly answered. Instead, the chapters show a hermeneutical to-and-fro movement between the poems, philosophical ideas, and the topic of empathy.

The first chapter "Philosophical and Literary Perspectives on the Problem of Anymal Minds" sketches the philosophical problem of anymal minds, beginning with an account of Nagel's famous bat example and its implications that reach beyond philosophy. It turns to the notion of empathy to explain how Cartesian dualism is still alive in this debate. Exploring the close connection between poetry and philosophy, the chapter proposes an answer to the default definition of empathy which involves matching emotions between separate, real and similar humans. The chapter culminates in a discussion of *The Lives of Animals* by John Coetzee, a novella that epitomises the relation between anymals, poems and empathy when Coetzee juxtaposes *reading* Ted Hughes' "The Jaguar" to *walking* with a jaguar "flank to flank" (114). This juxtaposition confronts the above-mentioned opposition of anymals inside a text versus anymals outside a text.

Chapter 2, "Giving Anymals a Voice", addresses the opposition between anymals viewed through the lens of anthropocentrism and anymals as themselves. Due to the untranslatability of anymals' worlds, capturing anymals' voices is perhaps the most difficult thing to achieve. I postulate that poets imagine anymals as body-minds, and picture their voices accordingly, not as inner disembodied propositions, but as bodily language. Here, I introduce the concept of 'zoopoetical tools' to substantiate the idea that in poetry anymals are presented as body-minds. Kerstin Ekman's *The Dog* and Les Murray's poem

"Pigs" offer literary examples to show that the distinction between understanding thoughts either as *de re* (about the thing; leaving out the perspective of the experiencer) or *de dicto* (about what is being said, a reflection of the mind of the experiencer) falls short. This final finding questions in a broader sense our idea of a mind as closed off from the world.

Chapter 3 "Openness, Wholeness, and Growth: Exploring Additional Zoopoetical Tools" discusses the zoopoetical tools rhythm, metaphor, simile, and neologism, and a series of more specific zoopoetical techniques like descriptions *ex negativo*, pronoun drop, commingling words, questions and hesitations, and zoopoetical chiaroscuro through the interpretation of zoopoems by Judith Herzberg, Ted Hughes, Elizabeth Bishop, D.H. Lawrence, Ida Gerhardt, and John Updike. In each poem, these tools diminish the degree of anthropocentrism and reveal the anymals as themselves. This phrase, however, poses a difficult question: what would it mean to imagine anymals as themselves?

Chapter 4 "Anymals Moving Through Text and World" addresses the degree to which anymals roam on the line between poetry and reality. How much reality do zoopoems convey and what do we mean when we say that text and world are separate entities? The opposition between "anymals inside of a text versus anymals outside of a text" is a complicated one, especially when bearing in mind the ease with which human protagonists exist in the real world. The outcome of the analysis significantly impacts the overall proposal that readers through reading zoopoetry can empathise with anymals.

Chapter 5 "Towards an Understanding of Zoopoetical Empathy" returns to the empathy debate to construe a theoretical definition of zoopoetical empathy that is commensurate with the findings from the previous chapters. An evaluation of Iris Murdoch's and Simone Weil's concepts of unselfing helps to formulate a definition of zoopoetical empathy that stays close to the poeticality of the 'feeling with' experienced when reading zoopoetry. In following Weil and Murdoch, I propose selfless attention to be the heart of zoopoetical empathy, instead of matching emotions.

In Chapter 6, "Four Poetic Case Studies", aspects of selfless attention are highlighted. Connecting zoopoetry and zoopoetics, Elizabeth Bishop's "The Moose" and "The Fish", Ted Hughes' "The Thought-Fox" and "The Horses", Les Murray's "Equanimity" and "Spermaceti", Judith Beveridge's "How to Love Bats", Frederike Harmsen van Beek's "Good Morning? Heavenly Lady Ping" and Mary Oliver's "The Real Prayers are Not the Words, but the Attention that Comes First" envision a form of "feeling with" that consists of the achievement of an attentive, diminished self. Selfless attention functions as an interpretative framework for the poems, and, finally, it also broadens the default definition of empathy. It substantiates instances of felt empathy: fictional, poetical, or

non-textual, in which the observer feels with the object under contemplation despite the absence of obvious or strict similarities.

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94 'Iederdier' introduceer ik hier, op de valreep, als vertaling van 'anymal'.